

Timeline of Open Expression Guidelines at Penn

1960s

University President: Harnwell 1953-1970

- 11/1967: During the Vietnam War, student protests block on-campus recruitment interviews with the CIA and Dow Chemical by staging a sit-in and singing "Exploitation Blues." In response (11/27/1967), the Steering Committee of the University Council forms an ad hoc "Committee on Implementation of the University's Policies on Free Speech and Lawful Assembly" to adjudicate cases against those protesters; students protest that this committee is illegitimate. A Commission on Open Expression, led by Robert Mundheim and including faculty and students, is charged with reviewing open expression policy and enforcement ([source](#)).
- 4/1968: As interim procedures pending the work from the Commission on Open Expression, University Council votes to adopt the AAUP's "Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students" ([source](#)).
- 5/1968: The Commission on Open Expression submits its report to the Senate Advisory Committee, with plans for it to be brought to the University Council and Faculty Senate in the fall. Its recommendations (listed in full in the Almanac in September) begin with: "That it is essential to uphold the principle of freedom of expression and lawful assembly on campus and demonstrations must be permitted despite the potential hazards." They also recommend that "a university-wide committee of five students, five faculty members and two administrative members be created which has ultimate power to interpret the proposed Guidelines and to resolve all disputes arising under them" ([source](#)).
- 5/1969: Guidelines on Open Expression based on the 1968 Mundheim report are adopted by University Council after going through a student body referendum vote (which they pass 471-194) ([source](#)). President Harnwell's annual report in October 1970 describes a "shift in the power balance" away from "hierarchical and authoritarian patterns" and towards shared governance.



Vietnam War protesters in 1967. Daily Pennsylvanian, [University Archives](#).

1970s

University President: Meyerson 1970-1981

- 5/10/1971: Cafeteria workers (AFSCME Local 54) go on strike, and the Committee on Open Expression issues a reminder of relevant guidelines. The Almanac publishes side-by-side statements from the strike support committee and from University administration ([source](#)). The COE determines that strikers and supporters violated the guidelines by blocking access to the library. University Council resolves “that in all future negotiations and actions involving disputes between the University and labor unions, a prominent part of the instructions to negotiating administrators should include the Guidelines on Open Expression” ([source](#)).
- 1977: Public Safety is found to have used work study students as undercover surveillance agents, prompting review of the Open Expression Guidelines. The Safety and Security Director “retires early” in April 1977 ([source](#)). The Committee on Open Expression publishes their report in April 1977 ([source](#), p. 3) prompting a review of the Guidelines ([source](#)). A subcommittee of the Committee on Open Expression is tasked with drafting amendments to the guidelines, and publishes its draft on 3/21/1978 ([source](#)).
- 4/12/1978: Amended Guidelines are approved by the University Council ([source](#)). There is no record in subsequent Almanacs of the president (at that time, Martin Meyerson) either declining or accepting these amendments; they seem to be treated as final once approved by the University Council.

1980s

University Presidents: Meyerson 1970-1981, Hackney 1981-1993

- 4/9/1986: A demonstration in President Hackney’s office on divestment from apartheid South Africa leads to conflict over the Guidelines ([source](#)): the administration unilaterally rules that the Guidelines had been violated and demands that the demonstration stop, without consulting COE. COE investigates, rules that the Guidelines were not violated, and raises concerns that, in fact, the *administration’s* actions to suppress the demonstration violated the Guidelines. The President disagrees, and in October appoints a Special Committee, separate from COE, to review the Guidelines ([source](#)).



“Millersville” (named for then-chair of Penn’s Board of Trustees, Paul Miller) Anti-Apartheid “shanty” built by Penn students on College Green. Bob Laramie, [Daily News](#).

- 4/29/1987: The Special committee makes its recommendations ([source](#)), and over objections from students and COE members, the revisions are voted on and approved ([source](#)), then “accepted” by the President in May, despite the fact that University Council apparently requested further review ([source](#)). In particular, these changes strip adjudicatory power from the Committee on Open Expression, concentrating power in central administration. Objections continue into the summer ([source](#)).
- 9/8/1987: the Committee on Open Expression chair claims that COE was not given enough time to review the proposed changes and “expects” that changes will not be enacted until it is able to review the changes and make its report. The president declines and publishes the guidelines as approved by University Council ([source](#)).
- 11/24/1987: COE reviews another round of changes, and approves a set of revised guidelines ([source](#)). Two details are of note: first, clarity around “unimpeded access” is removed, which will allow suppression of future protests on the basis that they unreasonably impede access. Second, COE objects to the administration being given sole authority to determine that behavior is in violation of the Guidelines, but does not have an immediate counterproposal, so the revisions are adopted.
- 3/1/1988: A change ([source](#)) is proposed by the Committee on Open Expression that would enable COE to intervene if the administration declares that conduct violates the Guidelines: “After complying with the Vice Provost's or delegate's order, individuals or groups may request that the Committee on Open Expression determine if the guidelines were properly interpreted and applied to their conduct. If the individuals or groups refuse to comply with the Vice Provost's or delegate's order, they may challenge the appropriateness of the order to the judicial system. If the judiciary finds that the conduct was protected by the guidelines, all charges should be dismissed.” The change is approved by the University Council on 4/26 ([source](#)).
- 11/1/1988: The President declines to accept the change to the Guidelines that was approved by University Council and shares the then-current Guidelines ([source](#)); instead of accepting the proposal that was approved through standard governance procedures, he tasks a committee with reviewing the Guidelines more fully.
- 10/11/1989: Larry Gross is appointed to chair a committee to review the Guidelines on Open Expression ([source](#), p. 11). Later, when announcing the temporary standards in 2024, University administration will say that this is the last time that the Guidelines were reviewed. The full committee is appointed on 10/24/1989 ([source](#)). On 3/6/1990, Almanac ([source](#)) announces that the draft revisions will be shared on 3/20/1990, and an open forum will take place on 3/22/1990.

1990s

University Presidents: Hackney 1981-1993, Fagin (interim) 1993-1994, Rodin 1994-2004

- 3/20/1990: The Committee announces proposed revisions to the guidelines ([source](#)). They say “The Committee determined that the Guidelines were not in need of a major

overhaul, but that relatively minor amendments and additions would serve to correct the problems which we detected.” They amendments include several important additions:

- “In case of conflict between the principles of the Guidelines on Open Expression and other University policies, the principles of the Guidelines shall take precedence.”
 - In the following Almanac, 3/27/1990, members specifically address the relationship between this policy and harassment ([source](#)): “Our ability to have and to recognize this commitment to free speech is a privilege-one that places a great responsibility upon us, as a community, to protect our members from consistently enacted harassment. It is the institutionalized support of harassment by our culture, and our university, that is both most harmful and most difficult to identify and prevent. If evaluating the harassment policies in light of open expression will give us more opportunity to think about or enact this responsibility, then we should. But not with the idea that our commitment to ending harassment has in any way been curtailed.”
- “When the Vice Provost or delegate declares that an individual or group has violated the Guidelines, he or she may request to examine their University identification.”
- 4/18/1990: The proposed revisions are discussed at the Faculty Senate meeting, which is summarized in the 4/24 Almanac ([source](#)). That section reads: “The discussion on the proposed revisions of the Open Expression Guidelines centered on the proposed addition to paragraph 1 subsection D which states “In case of conflict between the principles of the Guidelines on Open Expression and other University policies, the principles of the Guidelines shall take precedence. (Ms. Hunt, Mr. Glasker, Prof. Kors, Ms. Inglesby, Ms. Garfinkel, and Mr. Phaahla expressed views on this question). Also discussed was the question about whether if a person was told they were violating or would violate the guidelines if they continued and then that person desisted, then is the person in violation (Section III b&5c). (Mr. Pringle, Prof. Cohen, Prof. Gross, Ms. Garfinkel and Prof. Lior spoke about this question and evidence.)”
- 5/9/1990: The proposed changes are approved by the University Council in an 18-9 vote ([source](#)), but are not yet final pending review for consistency by an “umbrella committee.”
- 5/17/1990: The Guidelines are disregarded to eject student protesters from an address by Ronald Reagan on campus ([source](#)); GAPSA issues a resolution calling for investigation ([source](#)).
- 12/3/1991: The new Guidelines come into effect after approval by the President. President Hackney describes the process as follows: “The Guidelines on Open Expression were published “For Comment” in Almanac on October 15, 1991. They have

been reviewed by the University Committee on Open Expression, and the University Council recommended their adoption at its November 13, 1991 meeting. I have therefore decided to adopt the new Guidelines as printed below, and they shall be effective as of the date of their publication in Almanac (12/3/91).” The Guidelines are printed in full in the Almanac ([source](#)).

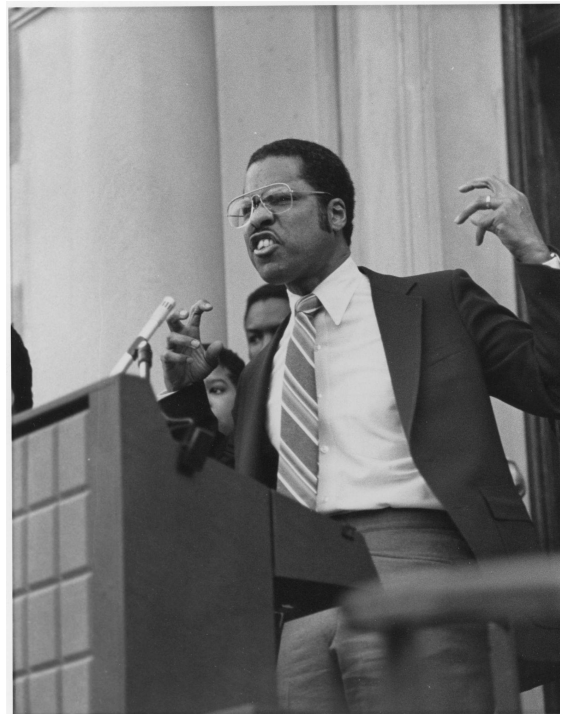
- 5/12/1992: After experiments by COE ([source](#) / [source](#)), University Council accepts standards on reasonable sound levels (“the level of 85 dBA measured 10 feet from the source or amplifier should be the maximum intensity allowed in Blanche Levy Park and on Locust Walk, or within 50 feet of a building”), but rejects a proposal that police be allowed to photograph persons accused of violations of the Guidelines who review to provide ID ([source](#)). 12/15/1992: After continued motions (including one that proposed that those who refuse to provide identification be arrested, [Nov. 1992](#)) a motion allowing those other than Open Expression monitors, including police officers, to photograph for identification purposes persons accused of violating the Guidelines and refusing to provide identification ([source](#)) is passed by University Council ([source](#)); the final version is shared in January ([source](#)), and complete guidelines with the sound and photography amendments are “issued” by President Hackney in March ([source](#)).
- 4/15/1993: In the wake of the second Rodney King verdict, students confiscate copies of the Daily Pennsylvanian in protest of racially discriminatory coverage ([source](#)). A standing faculty member ([source](#)) of the Committee on Open Expression personally submits a complaint against “the Black Community” and then participates in COE deliberations on the issue - which finds that the students violated the guidelines - without disclosing that he submitted the complaint ([source](#)). After significant discussion, including a ruling by COE that the Guidelines had been violated ([source](#)) and a report from the Public Safety Task Force ([source](#)), a standing



Dumpster full of copies of the Daily Pennsylvanian, removed in protest against “the blatant and voluntary perpetuation of institutional racism against the Black Community by the DP”. Steve Waxman, [Daily Pennsylvanian](#).

faculty member is appointed as a Special Judicial Inquiry Officer by VPUL to investigate, issuing a report on 9/14/1993 ([source](#)).

- 7/1/1993: Sheldon Hackney's presidency (1981-1993) comes to an abrupt end after the [water buffalo incident](#), and Claire Fagin is appointed interim president (1993-1994).
- 2/28/1995: As of this time, according to the Bylaws of the University Council, "The Committee (on Open Expression) shall consist of thirteen members: five faculty members, two A-1 staff members, one A-3 staff member, and five students. The faculty and A-1 staff members are appointed to two-year terms, staggered so that in each year either two or three faculty members are appointed, and one A-1 member is appointed. The student members are appointed to one year terms" ([source](#)).
- 4/18/1995: In response to a student publication quoting Prof. Houston Baker (an African American professor specializing in African-American literature) criticizing Dean Rosemary Stevens about affirmative action, and in particular about Asian-American students, administrators and faculty come to Dean Stevens' defense ([source](#)), and the editor removes copies of the paper from circulation. The African American Association alleges unequal application of Open Expression Guidelines to suppress protest and expression by African Americans while allowing them to be attacked by others under the guise of open expression, specifically citing the differential response in this instance as compared with the events of 1993 ([source](#)).
- 4/29/1997: The Policy on Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources is updated (after a proposal on 2/4/1997 - [source](#)) to clarify that OE "extends to and includes the electronic information environment, and interference in the exercise of those rights is a violation of this policy and of the Guidelines on Open Expression." ([source](#)).
- 11/12/1997: After recommendation by the Committee on Committees, COE is expanded to sixteen members with the addition of three faculty members, for eight total faculty members, two A-1 staff members, one A-3 staff member, and five students ([source](#)).
- 1/13/1999: After discussion between COE and the Safety and Security Committee ([source](#)), the University Council asked the Open Expression Committee to "revise or interpret" the Open Expression Guidelines to account for closed-circuit television



Prof. Houston Baker at a protest on then-President Hackney's lawn. [Daily Pennsylvanian](#).

monitoring ([source](#)). University Council votes to approve a proposal from both committees that requires a seven-member committee to approve the release of any CCTV tapes from public areas, with student and staff representation ([source](#) / [source](#)).

2000s

University President: Gutmann 2004-2022

- 4/26/2000: COE now includes “seventeen members: eight faculty members, two A-1 staff members, one A-3 staff member, three undergraduate students, and three graduate/professional students. The faculty and A-1 staff members are appointed to two-year terms, staggered so that in each year either two or three faculty members are appointed, and one A-1 member is appointed. The student members are appointed to one-year terms” ([source](#)).
- 12/4/2002: COE membership is modified to reflect changes in staff classifications: “seventeen members: eight faculty members, two representatives of the Penn Professional Staff Assembly, one representative of the Weekly-Paid Professional Staff Assembly, three undergraduate students, and three graduate/professional students. The faculty and representatives of the Penn Professional Staff Assembly are appointed to two-year terms, staggered so that in each year either two or three faculty members are appointed, and one representative of the Penn Professional Staff Assembly is appointed” ([source](#)).

2010s

University President: Gutmann 2004-2022

- 8/27/2013: COE conducts a “thorough review” of the Guidelines on Open Expression to determine whether changes are needed; none are proposed ([source](#)).
- 5/5/2015: Following two iterations in the Almanac and three public hearings ([source](#)) adopts two new interpretive guidelines ([as proposed](#), and [in effect today](#)) covering (I) the invitation (and prevention of dis-invitation by public pressure) of speakers to campus and (II) open expression in electronic media. Importantly, guideline II states: “The value of free and open expression and vigorous debate apply with equal force to newer forms of communication, including emails, web sites, social media, and other technologies and communication media... Whether communications occur on Locust Walk or in cyberspace, open expression remains equally valuable to the University and equally protected to the same extent, under the same principles, and subject to the same limitations as non-digital forms of communication.”

2020s

University President: Gutmann 2004-2022, Pritchett (interim) 2022, Magill 2022-2023, Jameson 2023-2027

- Open Expression is seldom mentioned in Almanac issues in 2016-2023, except in reference to COE appointments and in occasional statements reiterating the importance of open expression (e.g. [Jan 2020](#)). 6/20/2023: Following a September 2022 [encampment](#) by Fossil Free Penn, COE [proposed](#) new interpretations of the Guidelines (without modifying the Guidelines themselves). Following an [open hearing](#) at which students and faculty expressed [concerns](#) that the interpretations do not do enough to protect open expression, in particular noting the ceding of power to VPUL - the interpretations state that “The Vice Provost for University Life (VPUL) or its delegate (VPUL-D) has the authority to determine if the guidelines are being violated by any member of the University community. The COE is advisory to the VPUL” and that when it comes to disciplinary actions, “the COE acts in an advisory capacity only.” The committee then finalized its interpretation ([source](#)), apparently without any need for vote or approval from the community or from the central administration
- 12/12/2023: Elizabeth Magill is forced to resign after a Congressional hearing over accusations of antisemitism in response to protests against Israeli attacks on Palestine ([source](#)). Larry Jameson is appointed interim president ([source](#)).
- 1/16/2024: The Faculty Senate Tri-Chairs (Tulia Falleti, Eric Feldman, and Vivian L. Gadsden) share a [faculty letter](#) with 1,214 signatures with the Board of Trustees. The letter rejects alumni, donor, and board interference in governance and open expression.
- 1/30/2024: The Faculty Senate Executive Committee issues a [Resolution](#) on Academic Freedom and Open Expression based on a draft initially proposed by Tulia Falletti in [December](#). The resolution reinforces the importance of open expression and of the central role of faculty in shared governance.
- 6/6/2024: In the wake of [April-May](#) encampments against Israel, and in an attempt to restrict future demonstrations with which its donors disagree, Penn’s central administration issues temporary Standards on Open Expression, which are unilaterally established ([source](#) / [source](#)). The process for drafting and approving these temporary standards is opaque; in its announcement, leadership claims “feedback and input were sought from School Deans, the Faculty Senate, and student, faculty, and staff leaders” but no evidence of any form of legitimate shared governance is provided. There is significant protest from students and faculty ([source](#), [source](#)).



Refaat Al-Areer Memorial Library at the Gaza Solidarity Encampment on College Green. Rachel Wisniewski, [New York Times](#).

As next steps, the administration says, “a faculty-led Task Force will be charged with reviewing the Guidelines on Open Expression and making recommendations for revisions to the Guidelines” and announces that Lisa Bellini and Sigal Ben-Porath will co-chair that task force.

It describes the process as:

The Task Force’s work will follow the historical precedent for reviewing the Guidelines on Open Expression, which last occurred in 1989. This review will include the Task Force providing recommendations for consideration by the Committee on Open Expression (COE). The COE, in turn, will present recommendations to the University Council. The University Council will then present final recommendations to the Interim President.

- 9/3/2024: Task Force on Open Expression appointed ([source](#)). It is tasked with:
 - Revising and making recommendations for the current structure, standards, and processes of the Guidelines on Open Expression, including the Temporary Standards and Procedures for Campus Events and Demonstrations;
 - Identifying any procedural and substantive issues that challenge the application of the Open Expression guidelines or that limit their effectiveness;
 - Reviewing the roles and jurisdiction of parties responsible for applying and enacting the Guidelines and related policies; and
 - Reviewing the Open Expression Observer program and making any required updates to its structure and practices which would ensure it meets contemporary needs.

It is comprised of:

- Lisa Bellini, *Chair*
- Sigal Ben-Porath, *Chair*
- Ria Ellendula (Undergraduate Assembly President)
- Vivian Gadsden
- Josh Kayser
- Sanjeev Khanna
- Ken Leichter
- Joelle Lingat (GAPSA President)
- Desmond Patton
- Wendell Pritchett
- Amy Sepinwall
- Daniel Singer
- *Ex Officio*: Wendy S. White, Senior Vice President and General Counsel

Its timeline is given as:

The task force will present preliminary recommendations to the Committee on Open Expression (COE) for review by the end of the fall 2024 semester. Recommendations will undergo further review and consideration by University

Council and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee during the spring 2025 semester. Final recommendations will be presented to the Interim President no later than May 31, 2025.

Per the next points, It appears that COE did approve a draft, but no such draft has ever reached the Senate Executive Committee.

- 11/2024 - 2/2025: Committee and Task Force on Open Expression work together to operationalize Task Force recommendations into a revised draft of the Guidelines on Open Expression ([source](#), p.11).
- 2/2025: Committee on Open Expression votes to approve draft guidelines based on Task Force recommendations, sending the approved draft back to the Task Force for further revisions ([source](#), p.11). As of that time, the membership of the Committee on Open Expression was:
 - Chair: Lisa Bellini
 - Faculty: Claire Finkelstein, Wendy Henderson, Harun Küçük, Zachary Meisel, Eric Orts, Chinedum Osuji, Simon Richter
 - GAPSA: Will Chan, Devo Probol, Mat Wilson
 - UA: Mia Antonacci, Euel Kebebew, Andrew Lu
 - PPSA: Cynthia Kwan, Kait Johnstone
- 4/29/2025: Sigal Ben-Porath provides an update to the University Council ([source](#)) - it is unclear whether a draft was presented to the University Council, as promised by the initial timeline, or whether this was more of a general update. This appears to be the last update or action from the Task Force. Its recommendations, and the draft guidelines approved by COE, have never reached the Senate Executive Committee or the broader Penn community.
- 3/31/2026: The Provost announces draft guidelines ([source](#)) along with listening sessions and a feedback form. The announcement references the Task Force, but there is no indication that any form of democratic process contributed to the administration's draft; given that the work of the Task Force was never made public, it is impossible to determine whether it shaped the administration's draft or was simply window dressing to create the appearance of shared governance. They state that the next steps will be:

Through the summer and early fall, my office will work with the Committee on Open Expression, Faculty Senate Tri-Chairs, and other campus stakeholders to review the feedback, identify key themes, and finalize a revised version of the guidelines, which will be presented at the University Council meeting on September 9, 2026. President Jameson will then review the final draft recommendations and publish the final version of the revised guidelines in *Almanac*.

As of 3/31/2026, there is no standing Committee on Open Expression; seemingly no Committee on Open Expression was ever convened for the 2025-2026 academic year,

despite it having been on the [agenda](#) for the 9/3/2025 Senate Executive Committee meeting.

- 4/15/2026: A Committee on Open Expression for the 2025-2026 academic year is convened ([source](#) / [source](#)). It is comprised of:
 - Chair: Philip Nichols
 - Liaison: J. Patrick Walsh
 - Faculty:
 - Paul Heaton
 - Wendy Henderson
 - Doug Jerolmack
 - Harun Küçük
 - Zachary Meisel
 - Abby Reisman
 - Chinedum Osuji
 - Graduate Students:
 - Ilana Cohen
 - Melissa Rowe
 - Mat Wilson
 - Undergraduate Students:
 - Melody Luo
 - Sarah Shahed
 - Ben Woods
 - PPSA:
 - Kait Johnstone
 - Elisabeth Maselli

The Provost [announces](#) that the next steps on open expression will be:

Over the summer, we will work with the Chair of the Committee on Open Expression and the Tri-Chairs of the Faculty Senate to capture the key themes that emerge from these comments and listening sessions, which will be summarized and shared with the campus community, and prepare a revised draft of the guidelines to present at University Council in September.

Senate Executive Committee members [express](#) “deep concerns” and SEC issues a [statement](#) rebuking the administration’s proposed Guidelines and the process through which they were created.

- 6/17/2026: Penn issues a revised timeline ([source](#)) in which it will circulate a draft “early in the fall semester” and will target the November 18 University Council meeting for the presentation of a revised document, with a tentative implementation date of January 1, 2027 for the final updated guidelines. The 2026-2027 committee is comprised of ([source](#)):
 - Chair: Kathleen Boesze-Battaglia

- Liaison: J. Patrick Walsh
- Faculty:
 - Iwan Barankay
 - Xue "Sherry" Gao
 - Paul Heaton
 - Doug Jerolmack
 - Phil Nichols
 - Chinedum Osuji
 - Anna Schapiro
- Graduate Students:
 - Noah Hall-King
 - Sophie Rivell
 - Nina Skae
- Undergraduate Students:
 - Ilana Cohen
 - Melissa Rowe
 - TBD
- PPSA:
 - Elisabeth Maselli
 - Kingkini Roy