

Wake Forest University Faculty Senate Statement on Freedom of Expression

The facts around the recent departure of a trainer from the Wake Forest University athletic staff have been clearly and widely reported. A Wake Forest staff member posted a social media post, received numerous threats and criticisms, including on an elected official's social media account, as a result, and ultimately decided to leave the university out of concern for her safety and the safety of others on campus, including student athletes. This direct assault on an individual's freedom of expression violates values that are core to our academic mission and society more broadly.

The pursuit of knowledge and truth demands an unwavering support of the right to academic freedom for those who teach, research, create, and perform - a right which stems from underlying principles of freedom of expression. The academic endeavor fails in the face of fear of censorship, intimidation, or reprisal that restricts the free exchange of ideas and points of view. These freedoms are central tenets of inquiry and understanding, and maintaining respect for the freedom of expression is a fundamental responsibility of educators, scholars and institutions of higher education. As stated in the University's policy on this topic: "Free expression and academic freedom are strong historical and cultural commitments of the Wake Forest University community."

Freedom of expression underlies our work to promote and aid understanding. This freedom enables teaching, research and the transmission of knowledge. These principles drive the mission and vision of faculty. As such, the undersigned members of the Wake Forest University Faculty Senate condemn acts that chill the right to freely express one's opinion. We encourage all in our community, whether on campus or beyond, to recognize and support the right of free expression and academic freedom.

Adopted by a vote of the Faculty Senate

Prof. Steve Virgil

School of Law