

Section V.F. - Demonstrations and Picketing

As an academic community, Virginia Tech values the rights of free expression and peaceable assembly and does not intend to restrict the exercise of these rights. However, all members of the university community are responsible for respecting conditions that preserve the freedom to learn. Demonstrations and picketing do not violate university policy unless they interfere with university functions, violate the rights of others, or break the law.

A demonstration is defined as the assembly of a group of persons to express their views on an issue. Picketing is defined as patrolling a building or area with or without carrying signs or handbills. The university requests that UUSA Event Services receive prior notification of picketing or demonstrations if the event is advertised on campus or presents a potential disruption. When a demonstration is planned or announced under the sponsorship of university-approved student organization, university officials will advise the group leaders of their responsibilities for maintaining order.

Demonstrations within a campus building may take place only during the normal operating hours of the building. Demonstrators or picketers are prohibited from blocking free entry to or free exit from buildings, interfering with free movement, or presenting obstacles to regular university activities. "Interfering with free movement" is defined as any physical denial or restriction of a person's ability to freely reach or leave a given geographical area, or abusive conduct as defined in the Code of Student Conduct. "Obstacles" are defined as physical devices, bodies, or signs which cause interference with free movement or sounds which prevent normal aural communications.

A demonstration in a building or area is limited to the number of persons the area can reasonably accommodate on grounds of public safety, as determined by a university official. There shall be no interference with demonstrations on the grounds of content of speech, except for any speech or demonstration which incites immediate, violent action and represents a clear and present danger to the campus community, which shall be a violation of this policy.

Any individual who is not a member of the university community and who is demonstrating, picketing, or participating in similar activities on campus may be asked to leave by any university official. If such persons refuse to leave when asked, they may be subject to arrest. Members of the university community include currently registered and enrolled students, university faculty, and university staff members.

Disruptive Activities If demonstrations or picketing become disruptive, infringe on the rights of others, or violate the law or university policies, the appropriate university official will advise those involved that they are in violation. Those involved will be asked to disperse immediately or be given a reasonable time limit to correct the situation. Failure to comply may result in arrest. In the event of disruption, the director of Virginia Tech Police will use the appropriate crowd control techniques to protect life and property and to ensure normal operation of the university.

Should disruptive activities occur, participating members of the university community will be held individually responsible for their actions. If damage occurs, those involved will be jointly and severally responsible for restitution before continuing at the university. In exceptional circumstances, students may be immediately suspended upon the reasonable belief that such action is necessary to avert a threat of violence or property damage. A full hearing in compliance with University Policies for Student Life will be provided as soon as possible.