

**FREE EXPRESSION GUIDELINES FOLLOW UP MEETING**  
**MINUTES**  
**April 9, 2026**

**MINUTES:** Free Expression Guidelines follow up meeting

**DATE:** April 9, 2026

**TIME AND PLACE:** 12:00 p.m., Remote via Zoom

**ATTENDING:** *T. Cooper (University Senate Executive Secretary), L. Foster (University Senate Chair R. Gigliotti (Chief of Staff - President's Office), J. McGruther (Assistant Deputy General Counsel), H. Pierce (University Senator), M. Smith (University Senate Administrative Assistant), D. Spagnolo (Paralegal – Office of General Counsel)*

A follow up meeting was held on Thursday, April 10, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. remotely via Zoom. The meeting was convened by Assistant Deputy General Counsel McGruther as a follow up to the February 23, 2026 special Executive Committee meeting.

**Discussion of actions taken by OGC following February 23, 2026 meeting:**

- Dominique reviewed similar guidelines that exist at other Big10 schools, with a focus on public institutions.
- Rutgers's Free Expression Guidelines fall in the middle of the spectrum (lax vs. strict guidelines).
- General trends from other schools include incorporating policies in their guidelines (conduct codes, disruption policies), having a permit or approval process for protesting, and schools having designated locations for protesting, though some of the locations do not have a distinction between protest or other types of events.

**The following topics emerged from the discussion:**

- There is room for clarification and specification to be included in the guidelines.
- The two main problems with the guidelines are the location restrictions and the three-day free speech permit requirement. Reasons for them being problematic include:
  - A map that was shared previously (from NB campus policy review committee) showing the discrepancy between the location of historic campus protests on College Ave in NB (e.g. against apartheid, the Vietnam war, etc – Voorhees Mall) and the current designated protest space (Rutgers Field).
  - No provision exists for spontaneous protests –what happens if students want to protest immediately following a political event?
  - Applying for a free speech permit implies that free speech can be denied.

- The 19 unions at Rutgers cannot fully exercise their labor rights without the ability to picket their boss's offices
- Sending groups to protest in the middle of nowhere, where no one will hear or see them, deprives them of free speech rights.
- There is need for a process with regards to spontaneous and direct protesting, which is distinct from other events (not treating bake sales like protests and vice versa). A potential notification system was proposed to track requests of protests.
- Locations for protesting across campus are requested to re-evaluated and expanded, as well as identify additional options and alternatives for spontaneous protesting.
- Future conversation on the guidelines is expected to include Chancellors, Kimberly Lewis, Executive Committee and Senate.
- The guidelines not being approved as a formal policy makes it difficult to understand who is responsible for them and who can answer questions about them. OGC reported they were originally from IP&O but it is unclear why they are housed there.
  - HP argues that this cannot be simply framed as an issue of safety alone, given the trade-off with free speech. HP- "The fact that they were unilaterally handed to us as 'guidelines,' rather than as university policy that has undergone the policy approval process, means (a) it's unclear how they originated, and (b) there is no defined process for how to revise them, which is problematic. The guidelines were established quickly as a reaction to a particular event (SJP encampment in 2024), not designed carefully to reflect our values as an institution. We should take the time now to redesign them in a way that does reflect our values."
- Executive Committee and OGC can work together over the summer to review changes to the guidelines, with a goal of having them revised before the start of the fall semester (August/September).
- Putting the guidelines through the PDC would take longer than September 2026 but would benefit from being formalized.

### **Next Steps**

- A meeting to be convened after graduation (end of May 2026) for Executive Committee, OGC, President's Office, Kimberly Lewis.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Taryn Cooper, Executive Secretary of the University Senate