

# Balancing Freedom of Speech & Campus Safety

## Student Discussion Guide

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Faculty Senate  
The University of Tennessee  
Knoxville, Tennessee

<https://senate.utk.edu/>

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## Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations

Here are four recommendations for conducting meaningful and beneficial conversations on difficult social topics.

### 1. Stay Engaged

You are explicitly invited into a dialogue on free speech and campus safety.

### 2. Expect to Experience Discomfort

A hallmark of examining social controversies is feeling uncomfortable with what we discover about others and our own perspective.

### 3. Speak Your Truth

We have an obligation to be honest about our thoughts, feelings, and opinions, even if, perhaps especially if, they are ultimately misconceptions. We also have an obligation to listen respectfully to the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of others.

### 4. Expect and Accept a Lack of Closure

Conversations about social topics rarely provide definitive answers.

Adapted from “Beginning Courageous Conversations about Race” by Glenn E. Singleton and Cyndie Hays, in Every Day Anti-Racism, edited by Mica Pollock, The New Press, New York, 2008, p. 18.

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The Rock on the UTK campus, November 9, 2018.

### Free Speech

First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution:  
“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

### Campus Safety

The UTK/UTIA community (administration, faculty, staff, police and students) each have a role in creating a campus where every student is safe and can share in an environment conducive to learning.

The messages present in this vandalism advocate murder and sexual assault, promote a disease that as of 2017 affects 37 million people globally, reproduce imagery used historically for the purpose of genocide, and run counter to every principle of the UT community.

### What is the right thing to do?