I am pleased to report that the Task Force on Speech and Inclusion has now completed its work and submitted to me a set of recommendations in accordance with its charge to create “a campus environment that supports freedom of speech and intellectual challenge through thoughtful and respectful engagement.”

This charge is as challenging and as important as any that confronts the College and all of higher education today. I commend the members of the task force (see Appendix A: Members of the Task Force on Speech and Inclusion) for the deeply collaborative way in which they tackled their work. Their recommendations are based on a year-long process of listening, deliberating, and drafting. In the early stages of their work they made strenuous efforts to engage the broader community through two town halls and an all-College survey. They then deliberated and drew together their findings in a series of biweekly meetings over two semesters. Throughout, task force members acknowledged that they themselves were not always in complete agreement and did not reach total consensus on all issues. I view this as a strength of their work: Their determination to build and sustain trust while holding different positions about the relative importance of key values, such as freedom and inclusivity, and the impact of power differentials among groups on campus, offers a model of open and respectful discourse for our community.

In the end, the task force members found considerable common ground. They agreed that “in place of its current ‘call-out culture,’ Wellesley needs to build an environment in which various constituencies feel heard and understood by one another. A community of teachers and learners will benefit from more robust structures to support mutual trust and the assumption of good faith all around. While respecting traditional disciplinary structures and areas of expertise, we believe that the College should strive to be a place where freedom of speech and inquiry are understood not as a privilege for some but as a foundation of knowledge and understanding for all.”

They also agreed that, in certain circumstances, speech can be sufficiently traumatizing to interfere with the educational experience of students and others, but also that speech harm should not be addressed in the same way as physical harm (see Appendix B: Annotated Bibliography). They concluded that placing restrictions on speech would be counterproductive, creating different kinds of harm while backfiring on the communities they were intended to protect. In that spirit, their recommendations focus on ways to provide support and training for members of the community to engage and communicate with each other productively and with sensitivity to difference of all kinds.
The task force recommendations were developed in four main categories:

A. Academic freedom
B. Power differences
C. Campus communication
D. Outside speakers

Within each category, the task force offered a number of specific recommendations. Almost all of them seem to me valuable and potentially achievable. Collectively they constitute a path forward that I am happy to endorse, and I list them below with the assumption that they are all worthy of further consideration and in some cases immediate implementation. In the couple of cases where the task force proposed steps that I could not endorse, such as an extension of the principle of academic freedom to encompass others beyond faculty, I have not included those ideas in this summary.

A. Academic freedom

The principle of academic freedom lies at the heart of the modern college, where the mission is study, scholarship, and the pursuit and dissemination of truth within academic disciplines. Wellesley has always stood strongly behind the academic freedom of its faculty, as the College’s mission depends on the ability of faculty to determine their own research questions, conduct their pedagogy without interference, and follow the evidence where it leads. The principle of academic freedom recognizes that the academy depends upon respect for freedom of thought and expression, and that the principle of academic freedom is an essential prerequisite for other values that colleges hold dear.

For these reasons, the chief professional organization of college and university faculties, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), places the principle of academic freedom at the center of its professional values and standards, first enunciated in 1915, reaffirmed in 1940 and 1970, and adhered to by almost all accredited and respected colleges and universities. The AAUP’s 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure lays out the three key protections that academic freedom provides faculty members: (1) “full freedom in research and in the publication of results”; (2) “freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject”; and (3) the ability to speak and write as citizens “free from institutional censorship or discipline.” This last element links the principle of academic freedom to the first amendment right of freedom of speech.

During the listening phase, the task force observed that members of the community were afraid to express ideas and opinions that might expose them to stigma or opprobrium. Self-silencing is a problem on campus. It was clear that the community needs more understanding of how open debate and the expression of diverse and opposing ideas, especially in the classroom, can in fact reduce power differentials and advance the goals of diversity and inclusion. Freedom of speech and inquiry
too often are pitted against tolerance and pluralism when in fact, as the task force’s own conversations demonstrated, the two values can be mutually supportive.

The task force would like to see the College take a leadership role in demonstrating how a firm commitment to freedom of speech and inquiry can actively support, not simply co-exist with, dedication to inclusiveness and mutual respect.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a strong statement in support of academic freedom to be included in official College publications.
   a. In consultation with members of the faculty, develop a statement describing and affirming the pre-eminence of academic freedom that reflects and appropriately balances our own values.
   b. Include the statement in faculty, student, and administrative handbooks.
   c. Post the statement prominently on Wellesley’s website.

2. Integrate conversations about academic freedom into College programming, during but also beyond first-year orientation for students.
   a. Include the statement in orientation materials for faculty, students, and staff.
   b. Introduce the principle of academic freedom as a core value to students during orientation and have faculty participate in that conversation.
   c. Reinforce students’ understanding of academic freedom through advising and other avenues.
   d. Create ways to foster constructive conversation when there are disagreements. Academic departments (such as the philosophy department) that use conversation as part of the learning process could be consulted for ideas.
   e. Throughout the year, program regular moments of “community orientation” on academic freedom (perhaps these could be organized by the College chapter of the AAUP).

B. Power differences

During the listening phase, it became clear to the task force that the issue of trust—or rather mistrust—is an overriding problem in the community, one firmly rooted in power differences or perceptions of power differences. Policies and initiatives developed with regard to speech and inclusion must take into consideration the power differences within the community that allow some people more freedom and comfort to express themselves, and power to determine whether speech is injurious to the point that it interferes with others’ education, academic freedom, inclusion, or well-
being. A culture capable of promoting free speech and inclusion for all members requires an awareness of power differences and our privileges and biases, and a focus on our shared humanity so that everyone can grow and thrive.

**Recommendations:**

3. Find ways to acknowledge the many kinds of power differentials that constrain speech and erode the value of inclusion at Wellesley.
   a. To actively acknowledge and name power differences, plan and encourage conversations. For example, Harambee House held a discussion about issues surrounding money. This helped diminish the taboo and made the topic of money as a driver of power differences more “speakable.”
   b. Identify and mitigate to the extent possible any financial barriers to students’ involvement in College activities.

4. Institute “curiosity campaigns” to increase social awareness and understanding across different groups on campus.
   a. Curiosity campaigns are forums and activities that encourage community members to move beyond their “echo chambers” to seek knowledge about one another. They are a means to achieve better education, increased social awareness, greater community, and preparedness for leadership and success outside of Wellesley.
   b. As part of the curiosity campaigns, provide models of how to have difficult conversations.
   c. Present curiosity campaigns in admissions materials and from the moment new students, faculty, and staff come to the College.

5. Identify more opportunities for students and others to engage in activism beyond Wellesley to “pop the bubble.”
   a. Encourage community members to enlarge their sphere of activism to include not only Wellesley College but also the broader society. In addition to the benefits to society, an outward focus may provide a broader perspective on the world and create solidarity between community members, rather than division.

6. Engage faculty members more explicitly in promoting cross-cultural understanding, for example through course practices and materials.
   a. Faculty can promote cross-cultural exchange and dialogue that teaches students how to have constructive conversations about difficult, debated, and loaded subjects. This could be done through course materials, assignments, classroom ground rules, in-class exercises, and modeling by the faculty member.
C. Campus communication

Communication is at the heart of speech and inclusion, but the communication landscape is changing as new modes emerge, influenced by new social media and electronic platforms. There is much room for improvement in the way groups and organizations communicate across campus. A better understanding of the various constituencies on campus and clearer expectations about where and how information is disseminated will strengthen trust and make space for the belief that others are acting with best intentions.

Recommendations:

7. Centralize campus communications, making it easier for all constituencies to find information, especially on the College website, when they need it.
   a. Encourage greater use of the Google group “Community.”
   b. Limit the opportunities for mass email.
   c. Consolidate and rationalize information about committees and groups by creating a centralized location to present all committees and groups, to make the process of participating in College governance and campus activities more clear and transparent.
   d. Increase publicity about available campus resources for students, faculty and staff.
   e. Increase clarity in the administration’s messaging about what is being done and what is not being done.
   f. Create Daily Shots (perhaps monthly) to highlight leadership and other positive aspects of the Wellesley community.

8. Discourage the use of social media in favor of in-person venues, such as debates, conversations, and training in mediation skills.
   a. Teach mediation skills and organize seminars to practice these skills.
   b. Find ways for smaller groups to meet in person to have conversations, such as informal lunches, dinners, coffee hours with mixed groups of faculty, students, and staff. Encourage students to express their ideas, remain open to hearing different, or even opposite, ideas in return, and learning from the experience.
   c. Make “big and little” sibs part of the framing of the communication culture with big sibs as role models for little sibs.
   d. When conducting “big and little” matching, match based on some of their differences rather than on what they have in common. This will provide a relationship-based learning opportunity and exposure to different perspectives.
   e. Encourage students to participate in, attend, and read minutes of College Government meetings. These meetings are a good forum in which to raise concerns and have questions answered.
9. Strengthen the campus commitment to the Honor Code.
   a. Create a Student Code of Conduct and separate that from the Honor Code to make it clear that the Honor Code is not punitive.
   b. Include the Honor Code in admissions materials to signal its importance.
   c. Present information on the website about different conduct guidelines for students, faculty, and staff so that community members understand what to expect from each other. Likewise, include information about services such as the Stone Center and the role of the ombudsperson and Title IX coordinator.
   d. Incorporate the Honor Code into College ceremonies. All first-year students could be asked to sign a book saying they agree to abide by the Honor Code. Upperclass students could get involved by conducting a book-signing ceremony in residence halls, or this could be done in Big-Little pairs. This could become part of Flower Sunday, or the signed book could be delivered to the front of the auditorium during convocation.
   e. Reinforce the message that students can help each other live up to the Honor Code. As the letter sent by the chief justice before elections urges, students should strive to attack issues, not people. One approach to reach this goal could be an email/text buddy who can help vet messages before they are sent.

D. Outside speakers

Wellesley College seeks to provide an excellent liberal arts education for women who will make a difference in the world. In keeping with our mission, outside speakers are invited to campus to ensure exposure to a plurality of thought. In addition to bringing a variety of viewpoints and encouraging rigorous debate, many of these speakers offer expertise on topics that would not otherwise be intellectually examined at Wellesley. The ability to engage with and learn from outside speakers helps to ensure Wellesley students are prepared to make meaningful personal and professional contributions to the real world and to be major influencers in it. The College must work to ensure that our campus is an environment in which we are not afraid to engage in difficult conversations. The failure to do so would be detrimental to the ability of Wellesley students to effect change in the world.

Recommendations:

10. Provide support to groups—especially student groups—that bring in outside speakers.
    a. Create information sessions for student groups about speakers. This could be incorporated into the (College Government’s) presidents’ and treasurers’ training
session at the beginning of the year. This training would cover the reasons why speakers are brought to campus and how to ensure physical safety of participants.

b. Institute optional advisors for student groups that can act as a resource, with the purpose of helping students ensure a speaking event enriches the campus rather than dividing it. Student groups could select their own advisors.

c. When controversial speakers come to campus, faculty members could gather students with different opinions and prepare them to engage with the speaker. Part of this could be modeling how to have difficult conversations. A dialogue format works well for controversial speakers. One approach could be modeled after the second round of an Oxford debate in which every point must be formulated as a question. This exercise would help students constructively engage in difficult conversations with the task of questioning weaknesses in the logic of an argument.

d. Messaging about outside speakers should include a disclaimer such as: “The views of any invited speaker do not necessarily reflect the views of the College, but their expression reflects the College’s commitment to plurality of thought.”

e. Event organizers can be encouraged to post information about their event as soon as it is available for maximum transparency.
## Appendix A: Members of the Task Force on Speech and Inclusion

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Force on Speech and Inclusion Members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Arciniegas, Diego</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greer, Brenna Wynn</td>
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<td>Lynch, Kathryn (Cappy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wasserman, Sara</td>
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<td><strong>Staff</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cruzvergara, Christine*</td>
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<td>Haynie, Lauren</td>
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<td>Lancaster, Kim</td>
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<td>Sendoya, Ines</td>
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<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crump, Tyanna</td>
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<td>Preja, Irena</td>
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<tr>
<td>Webb, Kaila</td>
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<td>Weissman, Hannah</td>
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*2018 contributor
Annotated Bibliography


Philosophy professor at NYU explores the contradictions that haunt contemporary notions of identity. While we can’t do away with social identities historically based in conflicts rooted in earlier periods, understanding their history, their incoherence, and their limitations can bring us together through our common humanity.


Chemerinsky, dean of the law school at UC Berkeley, and Gillman, chancellor at UC Irvine, provide a broad survey of the history and legal landscape surrounding free speech, especially on campuses, clarifying what law and custom allow and where restrictions on speech not only undermine the functions of the university but have gotten ahead of the law. Favors “more speech” as a response to challenging or hurtful ideas rather than restraint on speech.


A critique by a noted Harvard law professor that prioritizes collaborative strengths to improve educational outcomes, especially focused on admission practices but with implications for broader educational philosophy.


An older but prescient and classic survey of the hypocrisies that ensue when political positions claim the right to determine the speech of others. Full of information and anecdotes current up to the time in was written, a lively antidote to cant and hypocrisy.


This article’s focus is the relationship between trauma and free speech as it applies in the education of medical students; the article’s purpose is to propose educational methods that “create an inclusive curriculum sensitive to the realities of teaching and learning in increasingly diverse societies.” “Ideologies and cultures within [Academia] contribute to the reproduction and perpetuation of…inequities and injustices.” “For those students whose identities…place them in oft-marginalized categories,” they assert, various acts of speech “increase individual stress…and contribute to poor
mental health and well-being. This is the psychological burden that students from marginalized groups must carry in addition to the usual academic load.”


Lukianoff, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, and Haidt, a social psychologist currently at the NYU business school, explore the culture of “safetyism” on campus and marshal data from cognitive psychology that suggest that confronting challenging ideas rather than withdrawing from them creates resilience.

**McGowan, Mary Kate. Just Words: On Speech and Hidden Harm. Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2019.**

McGowan argues that, rather than cause harm, speech can constitute harm, such as oppression, subordination, discrimination, domination, harassment, and marginalization. Examining a variety of speech forms, she asserts that speech constitutes harm when it enacts a norm that prescribes that harm.


Neilsen argues that not all speech is protected equally, that law and custom protect those with power and privilege from offensive speech “while placing on less privileged members [of society] an unrealistic duty to respond or accept their own subordination” (148). That is, the recommended strategy of counteracting, resisting or protesting offensive speech with “more speech” “places the burden of response on the individual target of such speech” who may not “talk back” because “they fear violence or even government intervention on behalf of [the one doing the talking]”(148-49).

**Strossen, Nadine. Hate: Why We Should Resist It with Free Speech, Not Censorship. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.**

A history and analysis of the category of hate speech by the first woman leader of the ACLU, currently a law professor at NYU. Traces the history of attempts to rein in hate speech (an elastic term) and demonstrates how such efforts can have effects that are opposite to their intentions.

**Waldron, Jeremy. The Harm in Hate Speech. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.**

Waldron argues that hate speech, in particular, presents harm to dignity and undermines the public good by “negat[ing] the implicit assurance that society offers to the members of vulnerable groups—
that they are accepted...as a matter of course, along with everyone else.” He rejects the “sticks and stones” theory of harm, stating that “the harm is not caused by the speech it is the speech” (88, 166).

Required reading in summer 2018 of all entering Princeton University students, this book by a Princeton political scientist explains how the principle of free speech supports the university’s basic functions of seeking truth and encouraging tolerance and openness to new ideas.

Surveys the broad history of academic freedom as a principle (as distinguished from the more general principle of freedom of speech) in order to offer it as a tool to counteract conformity on campus. Joanna Williams is a higher education researcher from the UK.