

UW System: To launch student free speech survey this week

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MADISON, Wis.—University of Wisconsin System Interim President Michael J. Falbo announced today the UW System will launch the Student Perceptions of Campus Free Speech Survey on Thursday, April 7.

The survey of students at the UW System's 13 public universities aims to measure and analyze undergraduate students' perception of free speech and freedom of expression at their universities.

The survey builds on the UW System's existing commitment to free speech and freedom of expression, as evidenced by [Regent Policy Document 4-21](#), which includes a requirement that the "UW System shall report annually to the Board of Regents regarding the efforts of its institutions to uphold the principles expressed in this policy and to fulfill the Board's Commitment to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression."

The topic of campus free speech has become a highly debated and often polarizing topic around the country. National student surveys on the issue exist, and the survey announced today will provide specific survey data from students in the UW System.

A recent report released by the Bipartisan Policy Center, ["A New Roadmap for Campus Free Expression,"](#) strongly recommends collecting this type of data as a part of continuous quality improvement for universities.

The Student Perceptions of Campus Free Speech Survey is funded by UW-Stout's Menard Center for the Study of Institutions and Innovation and is being conducted by the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service, a unit of the UW System.

“The goal of the project is to provide previously unavailable, highly relevant information that we hope will better inform discussions about potential changes to policy or law,” said Timothy Shiell, director of the Menard Center for the Study of Institutions and Innovation.

The survey will attempt to answer the following questions:

- What do students know about First Amendment free speech rights?
- How much do they value these rights?
- How much do students value viewpoint diversity?
- Do they perceive problems in viewpoint diversity at their campus?
- Do students self-censor? If so, why do they self-censor?
- Have students witnessed or experienced formal sanctions or punishment for constitutionally protected expression?
- To what extent do student perceptions vary with demographic factors such as their political party affiliation, gender, and race/ethnicity?

A research team of free speech experts and survey design experts have composed the survey items, which were vetted by other state and national experts. An advisory board representing a range of viewpoints has reviewed the survey and will review the survey final report prior to release as well as assist in promoting survey participation.

The survey will be released on April 7 and will remain open until May 6, 2022. To learn more, visit: wipps.org/UWfreespeech.