

# Democratic Engagement and Civic Learning

## Activism on Campus

USF's Voter Friendly Campus efforts are designed to support student democratic engagement and civic learning within a healthy campus political climate. A healthy campus political environment at USF is driven by USF's Principles of Community and leadership and civic engagement concepts (e.g. controversy with civility, conversations across difference, community engagement, and active citizenship) all within the bounds of community conduct expectations.

In preparation for variety of potential reactions to this year's election process, Student Success staff and students from across all three campuses have been developing resources and events to support a healthy post-election community. We encourage all USF Bulls to engage as active citizens while managing your health and wellness needs.

For more information, please contact the [Center for Leadership & Civic Engagement \(CLCE\)](#), at [CLCE@usf.edu](mailto:CLCE@usf.edu).

## Activism in Times of COVID-19

The University of South Florida holds the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff as our highest priority. As a member of the USF community, it should be your highest priority too.

The evolving coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is dynamic and you should regularly check campus and local resources to understand the current status of health and safety policies and procedures. University leaders are working closely with local, state and federal agencies to share the most updated information at [www.usf.edu/coronavirus](http://www.usf.edu/coronavirus).

**As of October 30, 2020, all USF meetings and events should continue to be held virtually. Face coverings and social distancing are required on all campuses.**

Safer, sustainable, and change-oriented alternatives include centering your community and beliefs as a priority in life choices by engaging in direct service, advocacy, and activism. Options include contacting elected officials, aligning consumer choices with your values, publicizing news in your networks, and providing direct service that addresses root causes of community needs.



# Activism: Safely and Responsibly Exercising Your Rights

## Free Speech at USF

The Basics of Free Speech at USF:

- Campuses are open forums for first amendment activities
- Time, place, and manner can be managed
- USF has policies on amplified sound and events
- Hate speech: speech has to reach a level of threat or intimidation to be considered hate speech
- Some speech is protected, some is not

| PROTECTED  | NOT PROTECTED   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Exchange of ideas</li><li>○ Respect</li><li>○ Vigorous debate</li><li>○ Civility</li><li>○ Disagreements</li><li>○ Tolerance</li><li>○ Temperance</li><li>○ Harmonizing competing values</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Fighting words<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Words designed to incite actions that would harm others</li></ul></li><li>○ Personal abuse<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Verbal or written abuse that endangers the health, safety, or well-being of others</li></ul></li><li>○ Harassment<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Conduct that is sufficiently pervasive, persistent, or severe that affects USF members participation in an university activity, Access to employment or work resource that is based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, or age.</li></ul></li><li>○ Disruptive conduct<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Behavior that substantially and materially disrupts the orderly process of the university or a member of the university community.</li></ul></li></ul> |

## USF Event Response Team

You will often see members of USF's Event Response Team at on campus protests, vigils, demonstrations, and other programs or speakers with controversial material or other risk factors. The Event Response Team is a trained group of USF staff members who are focused on:

1. Supporting free speech rights and student activism
2. Educating organizers and bystanders on their rights and responsibilities
3. Maintaining the university's ability to meet its academic mission
4. Responding to events in order to ensure a safe living and learning environment

## Attending a Protest

Before you engage as an active citizen, you should educate yourself on relevant issues and evaluate the event in relation to personal, group, and community values and beliefs. If you choose to attend, make a plan that considers your safety, health, and wellbeing. You should know, in advance, what to do, what not to do, what to wear, and what to bring. You can find a variety of online resources that can help you develop your plan.

You should also know your rights, responsibilities, and limits. The [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\) Know Your Rights](#) explains your basic rights under the U.S. Constitution and civil rights laws. The website will help you learn more about what your rights are, how to exercise them, and what to do when your rights are violated. One section specifically focuses on [Protestors' Rights](#) and provides information on organizing and attending a protest, including what to do if stopped by the police.