A RESOLUTION ON EXPANDING VIEWPOINT DIVERSITY AT
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

WHEREAS At Southern Methodist University, we know that exposure to diversity broadens our minds and prepares us for citizenship in a diverse democratic society.

RECOGNIZING Research shows that the kind of diversity that most improves the quality and creativity of thinking is viewpoint diversity. When everyone thinks alike, there is a danger of groupthink, prejudice, dogmatism, and orthodoxy. People in the majority benefit from interacting with individuals who see things differently.

ACKNOWLEDGING At a time when American democracy is polarizing into antagonistic camps and informational bubbles, many colleges and universities are becoming more intellectually and politically homogeneous. Orthodoxies arise, dissent is punished, and quality declines. We do not want that to happen in our community.

RECOGNIZING That when in research too many people approach a problem with the same set of beliefs, it is very easy to let some assumptions go unchallenged, which does not bode well for academic rigor and places us further from the truth because assumptions go unchallenged.

FURTHER NOTING Southern Methodist University generally has good tradition of respecting viewpoint diversity amongst members of its faculty compared to other institutions.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED We therefore welcome heterodoxy, meaning that we want to support those within our community who hold dissenting or minority viewpoints; we want them to express themselves freely and without fear. We value viewpoint diversity not merely out of compassion for those in the minority but also because such diversity helps us all to develop skills essential for life after graduation, including the ability to judge the quality of ideas for ourselves, the
ability to formulate arguments against ideas we reject, and
the ability to live and work amicably alongside those whose
ideas and values we do not share.

BE IT FURTHER
RESOLVED
We urge the university to adopt the Chicago Principles on
Freedom of Expression, which is a clear way for the
university to show commitment to viewpoint diversity is by
adopting the University of Chicago’s Principles on
Freedom of Expression, which states in part:

The University’s fundamental commitment is to the
principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed
because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by
most members of the University community to be
offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the
individual members of the University community, not for
the University as an institution, to make those judgments
for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by
seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously
 contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the
ability of members of the University community to engage
in such debate and deliberation in an effective and
responsible manner is an essential part of the University’s
educational mission.

BE IT FURTHER
RESOLVED
We request that the university’s administration endorse the
“Chicago Principles” as official university policy.

BE IT FURTHER
RESOLVED
We also request the implementation of a non-obstruction
policy for protests. We support the right of all students to
protest against speakers and writers with whom they
disagree, but we ask that protests be done in a way that
does not deprive other students of their rights to speak and
hear. When members of our community shout down a
speaker, or take other actions intended to make it more
difficult for a speaker to speak or for an audience to hear,
they are practicing obstruction, censorship, and sometimes
intimidation, not free speech. Such practices have no place
in any academic community.
RESOLVED

We request that the university formulate and enforce a non-obstruction policy. As stated in the Chicago Principles:

“The University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

We wish to support the expansion of viewpoint diversity. We request that the university include viewpoint diversity, and particularly political diversity, in its diversity policies and in its efforts to diversify the faculty and the curriculum. We want to encounter a range of viewpoints in the classroom, just as we will after we graduate.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fairooz Adams
Dedman Senator