

System-wide Policy:	
GE0004 - Philosophy on Institutional and Leadership Statements	
Version: 2	Effective Date: 03/03/2025

Section 1. Policy Statement

The principal mission of the [University](#) of Tennessee is the pursuit and the dissemination of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. To foster this mission, when speaking in the name of or on behalf of the University or any University unit, University employees shall honor the principle of institutional neutrality and refrain from making statements on disputed political, moral, and religious topics. Public statements in the name of the University should be avoided, except where determined by the President, the Chancellor of a campus, or the Vice President of the Institute for Public Service, to be appropriate to address an issue that bears materially and directly on the University’s core mission. The role of the University is to provide an impartial platform for scholarly debate; it is not to settle those debates.

A position of institutional neutrality is not intended to limit the speech of the University’s community acting or speaking as individuals in their own names and not in the name of the University. Rather, institutional neutrality allows the University to be a true marketplace of ideas in which students, faculty, and staff have the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, learn, and discuss any issue. However, when acting in a personal capacity as a citizen, an employee of the University speaks publicly or writes for publication, the employee shall take care to ensure that the employee’s statements are not reasonably interpreted as being made on behalf of the University. Likewise, a position of institutional neutrality is not intended to limit faculty members’ academic freedom as recognized by Board Policy BT0006 and campus faculty handbooks.

Section 2. Responsible Official

Questions about this policy, including questions about whether particular activities are subject to this policy, should be directed to the General Counsel of the University. The email address for the contact is ryanstinnett@tennessee.edu.