

Duquesne University welcomes and encourages academic discussions on a wide array of topics. Thus, panel discussions on serious issues regarding sexuality and gender identity, including the one that accompanied last year's Gender Neutral Fashion show, are a legitimate part of academic discourse.

No matter what group seeks to use University resources for programing, Duquesne University has consistently required that it show respect for the Catholic religious identity of the institution and demonstrate sensitivity to all members of the campus community, and for the diversity of opinion and faith traditions that are part of our campus. It is for this reason, among others, that faculty and student groups wishing to reserve University space and to post/disseminate materials around campus – holding these out as University-sanctioned events – have been required for decades to seek approval in advance.

All universities have processes for approving events, managing their brands, and reflecting on feedback from their constituencies. Last year's WGS panel discussion on inclusivity in the classroom prompted positive feedback from student and parent attendees, who appreciated the academic content of the event. However, the posters advertising the event generated numerous complaints from a variety of students, faculty and alumni. These concerns were shared with then-Dean James Swindal in the McNulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts. Dean Swindal shared this feedback with the organizers to ensure that such promotional materials were not utilized in the future. Also, the University determined that there was a gap in the process approving posted material, and that work-study students were stamping materials as "approved for posting" without any review of content. The University therefore put in place a system that ensured staff members and the relevant dean will review materials before they are posted.

The University did not "cancel" or "ban" the proposed WGS/Gender Forum event this year. Rather, before approving space and the utilization of University resources for such an event, it has sought to determine that the program is academically-focused and that promotional materials are not designed in a fashion that will unnecessarily offend others. This process was slowed in part because of leadership transitions in the College and staff turnover in other offices. The misunderstanding over the status of the event provides an occasion for clarifying University processes across campus.

Faculty, staff, and students share in Duquesne University's Catholic and Spiritan mission, and therefore have a common responsibility to develop programs and events that foster academic rigor and align with our core values. Programs that address potentially contentious issues should thus be developed in a consultative manner, beginning with the dean of the relevant school and subsequently including relevant stakeholders, such as the Office of Mission and Identity, Campus Ministry, Student Life, and the provost's office to discern how the event can be respectful of others on campus and maintain a focus on the legitimate academic purpose of such a program.

In that spirit, we welcome the opportunity for conversation regarding Duquesne's Catholic and Spiritan mission, academic inquiry and freedom, and the practice of civility and sensitivity in a

diverse community. The Office of the Dean and the Office of the Provost are engaging with WGS leadership and have every expectation that an academically rich event will take place.

Dr. Kristine Blair  
Dean, McAnulty College

Dr. Darlene Weaver  
Associate Provost for Academic Affairs