

To: Steering Committee

From: HSS Chairs Council

Date: January 28, 2019

Subject: Use of Campus Property Policy

On April 12, 2018, a group calling themselves “Bible Believers” staged an event on TCNJ’s campus. The group gathered in the Alumni Grove, between the R. Barbara Gitenstein Library and Eickhoff Hall, displayed signs with statements such as “Women belong in the kitchen” and “Obey Jesus or Hellfire,” and chanted slogans deriding Muslims, women, members of the LGBTQ community, and others. A number of TCNJ students responded by gathering around the group and staging an impromptu counter protest. Some of these students and others, disturbed by the event, sought out support from faculty as well as Student Life.

The Department Chairs and Program Directors in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences recognize the right of the public to use designated TCNJ spaces, and we also recognize the right to free speech. However, we are concerned the locations designated as public use areas, such as the Alumni Grove, allow such gatherings to interfere with the educational mission of the institution.

We therefore ask Steering to revisit the Use of Campus Property Policy, the document that establishes how campus spaces can be used, and by whom. The current policy dates to April 17, 2012, and was apparently revised on April 12, 2018

This policy distinguishes between public use areas, limited use areas, and non-public areas. While it provides examples of non-public areas, it is less clear about what the public use areas are. The attached map specifies four public use areas, two of which are in highly trafficked area that is visible both from student study areas and residence halls: the Alumni Grove and Quimby’s Prairie. These two locations lie directly in pathways that are highly trafficked by our students.

The currently policy dates to 2012, and it was apparently edited on April 12, 2018. There are no notes in the policy that indicate who edited this policy, or to what ends, and these policy changes were not subject to any sort of public fora or feedback process.

In light of broader discussions about speech on campuses, as well as recent events on our campus, we feel this is the moment to review and revise this policy in a way that draws on the voices of all stakeholders on campus.

Therefore, we ask Steering to charge the appropriate governance committee with initiating a full review of this policy that includes research into best practices.