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Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces Historical Context and Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals

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OVERVIEW

The term *safe space* has become part of recent controversy surrounding a larger debate regarding freedom of expression on college campuses. An exploration of the term's use, however, shows that it has been appropriated by the media and campus administrators without a clear understanding of the nuanced context from which it has been drawn. Furthermore, a 2013 publication by Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens described how the term *brave space* may more aptly describe the practice of safely fostering challenging dialogue within the classroom environment.

This paper provides a thorough background on the history of safe spaces and brave spaces within the contexts of movement-building, academic theory, student support services, and the classroom; the paper then uses campus-based research and case studies to exemplify the kinds of safe and brave spaces that actually work. Finally, this paper provides recommendations for student affairs professionals to better understand safe and brave spaces and challenges these individuals and their campuses to prioritize the use of these spaces to ensure educational access and success for the entire campus community.

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Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces

Historical Context and Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals

In fall 2016, University of Chicago Dean of Students John Ellison chose to address what he and many others in higher education felt was a disconcerting trend toward intellectual isolationism on college campuses. He published a letter to incoming students, stating that the university would no longer tolerate the use of trigger warnings or safe spaces: “We [at the University of Chicago] do not condone the creation of intellectual ‘safe spaces’ where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own” (Grieve, 2016). In contrast, commentary made earlier in the year by Morton Schapiro (2016), president of Northwestern University, resurfaced affirming the value of safe spaces, stating, “I’m an economist, not a sociologist or psychologist, but those experts tell me that students don’t fully embrace uncomfortable learning unless they are themselves comfortable. Safe spaces provide that comfort” (para. 10).

Both Ellison and Schapiro used the term *safe space* as a pivotal part of their messaging; however, a closer look at how each of them used the term reveals key differences. Ellison defined a *safe space* as a place where students with different ideas can isolate themselves from those who would disagree with them (Grieve, 2016). This kind of space, he claimed, coddles students, meeting them exactly where they are comfortable, without pressing them further (Grieve, 2016). Schapiro (2016) defined a *safe space* similarly as a space where students of diverse backgrounds can find comfort, but instead he believes that comfort leads to a valuable outcome for students by also creating opportunities for honest dialogue and learning. Both administrative leaders exemplify how a safe space is presented within varying contexts. Ellison identified the kind of safe space, utilized within student support or activist spaces, where historically marginalized students require specific support and attention (Grieve, 2016); Schapiro (2016) identified the kinds of safe spaces fostered in a classroom atmosphere.

Both university representatives operate under an assumption that they are referring to the same learning environment, and the debate takes off from here. Both kinds of safe spaces appear on today’s college campuses—the kind of safe space allowing marginalized individuals opportunities to retreat from the very real threats and demands they face by their very existence and the kind of space to allow students to process new and uncomfortable ideas productively. This paper explores the various contexts of safe spaces within the higher education community and posits that a fuller understanding of safe spaces, brave spaces, and the differentiation between the two may clarify some of the more resounding misconceptions within the safe space debate.

SAFE SPACES VERSUS BRAVE SPACES: DEFINITIONS AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The term *safe space* has been used in various contexts in higher education—from movement-building, to academic theory, to student support services, as well as in the classroom. Although the origin of the term remains unclear, its many uses have ultimately centered on increasing the safety and visibility of marginalized or oppressed community members. While the focus of the current discussion on college campuses has been on safe spaces, the history behind the term, as shown in the following pages, demonstrates that it is used to describe different types of safety. Therefore another term—*brave space*—is introduced to draw attention to the differences and to bring clarity to the conversation.

The term *brave space* was first popularized by Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens (2013) in chapter eight—“From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces”—of their book *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections From Social Justice Educators*. In it, a brave space within a classroom environment contains five main elements:

- ◇ “Controversy with civility,” where varying opinions are accepted
- ◇ “Owning intentions and impacts,” in which students acknowledge and discuss instances where a dialogue has affected the emotional well-being of another person
- ◇ “Challenge by choice,” where students have an option to step in and out of challenging conversations

- ◇ “Respect,” where students show respect for one another’s basic personhood
- ◇ “No attacks,” where students agree not to intentionally inflict harm on one another

A commonly constructed safe space within a classroom environment is designed to have most if not all of these components, and for this reason, along with others discussed in more depth in the following pages, these intentional classroom environments are now increasingly referred to as *brave spaces*. For the purposes of this paper—and to create a clear distinction between definitions—a classroom safe space will be referred to hereafter as a brave space.

The term *safe space* will continue to be used within the contexts of movement-building, academic theory, and student support services, where safety of a marginalized demographic takes precedent.

MOVEMENT-BUILDING

College campuses have been centers for civic and political activism since at least the 1800s. Accounts from private universities date back to 1820, when Yale students blew up a residence hall in their efforts to ignite a change in curriculum, but activism connected to larger societal movements is most notable during the latter half of the 20th century (Altbach & Peterson, 1971; Pasque & Vargas, 2014). Some of the most successful social movements in the past century were centered around campus-based organizations that focused on multiple issues, such as the Students for a Democratic Society, which took on activism over the Vietnam War, economic justice, and civil rights during the 1950s (Van Dyke, 2003). The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s would not have come to fruition without the support of historically black colleges and universities, which provided focal centers of protest and contributed bodies and scores of leaders to the movement, as well as lawyers to spearhead the pivotal court cases that led to the landmark 1954 ruling *Brown v. Board of Education* (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007).

In a movement-building context, *safe space* seems to have started appearing prior to the Stonewall riots in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community, where the term was used in neighborhood-based organizing efforts. Here, a safe space was a place where members of the queer community could be open about their respective identities, with lower risk of negative societal or legal repercussions at a time when many states still had anti-sodomy laws in effect (Hanhardt,

2013). While neighborhood-based spaces, especially the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, acted as a catalyst for queer advocacy and likely accelerated the adoption of the term safe spaces within the queer community, safe spaces were found on college campuses for decades prior (Beemyn, 2003).

As the Black Power and antiwar movements on colleges built clear ties to advocacy work, the Student Homophile League of the 1960s, particularly prominent at Columbia and Cornell Universities, also became more involved in grassroots work (Beemyn, 2003). The term *safe space* quickly became coupled with advocacy work overall. Safe spaces as advocacy spaces provided physical locations for organizational planning. The use of safe spaces was an integral part of the movement-building process, and created opportunities for intersectional communication and cross-issue dialogue.

The term continued to connect with issue-based advocacy through the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Freedom Riders created literal safe spaces on their interstate commutes, packed together on buses (Arsenault, 2006; Zinn, 1965). These tight-knit communities were places to foster actionable political strategies and propel the movement forward. Liberation movements of the 1980s and 1990s continued to use safe spaces as a way to exchange ideas and plan protests. Student-run organizations working to encourage campuses to divest from companies supporting apartheid and to build growing awareness concerning HIV and AIDS and the LGBTQIA community used safe spaces to share resources (Boren, 2001; Rhoads, 1998). Socioeconomic movements of the early 2000s, such as Occupy Wall Street, used safe spaces to deconstruct notions of hierarchy in building a movement. As of late, movements developing around additional social justice issues continue to use safe spaces to foster dialogues that value intersectionality and create opportunities for silenced voices to be heard. For example, advocates for prison abolition, currently defined as both penal moderation and limited use of incarceration as a form of punishment, with an emphasis on restorative justice measures; movements to promote gender identity and gender expression inclusivity and equality; and racial- or ethnic-based activism, channeled through youth-led community organizations such as the Black Youth Project or Asian Americans Advancing Justice all use safe spaces (Barker, 2011).

ACADEMIC THEORY

Although promoted to prominence through advocacy movements, *safe space*, some would argue, has a much older history than its use in those contexts. The term comes

up in academic thought through the development of queer, womanist, and critical race theories (Luhmann, 1998; Martin & Mohanty, 1986). For example, Olga Idris Davis (1999), communications professor at Arizona State University, dated the existence of American safe spaces—without being explicitly referred to as such—back to the formation of American colonies, centuries prior to political change-making. Davis (1999) dubbed what is known as the *kitchen legacy* in reference to the quiet resistance exemplified by Black American women in kitchens during times of slavery. She applied the kitchen legacy to the Black women who work in higher education today and practice resistance through academia.

Academically, safe spaces are also seen as providing opportunities for equitable access. The creation of physical spaces of access is an important one, considering the cultural shifts in marginalization for varying demographics. Cultural anthropology studies the value of space-making in terms of both studying a specific culture and, more broadly, understanding the disjointedness of our growing transnational economy. Theorist Arjun Appadurai (2011) introduced the existence of imagined worlds—imagined spaces or *scapes*—that rise from a combination of a fantasized past and an idealized future, through which innovation and idea-making is born. These spaces and the ability to operate within them connect heavily to accessibility and power, even though these spaces lack a physical manifestation.

Through a similar identity-studies lens, spatial layout is highly tied with representation and access. Within this context, safe spaces are ones where marginalized individuals feel more comfortable in their identities, but because these individuals are in close proximity to differently identifying neighbors, they are not necessarily risk-free environments (Bell & Binnie, 2004; Brueckner, 2000).

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Student support services offer safe spaces to a diverse student body across institutions of higher learning. The safe space within this context was created as a result of a call for institutional accountability to address campus climate concerns for marginalized and underrepresented students. Campus-based studies in the 1990s and early 2000s indicated decades of hostile treatment toward racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities (Rankin, 2005). An additional oppressed group, not as easily identified within the early campus-climate surveys, is that of military-connected students. For example, veterans were targeted amid some of the antiwar and movement-building efforts discussed earlier, such as efforts to remove the Reserve Officers'

Training Corps (ROTC) programs during the Vietnam War (Summerlot, Green, & Parker, 2009). In addition, research studies showed that certain vulnerable populations, such as sexual violence survivors or disabled veterans, require services be administered in alternative methodologies that are better suited to their specific needs.

Returning veterans, for example, experience a wide array of health issues, from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to traumatic brain injuries (TBI), but most do not utilize the traditional student support pathways, including those for students with disabilities. An article on veterans of the Global War on Terror (2001–2013) reported that in 2009, 70% of military personnel were unable to receive mental health support until after the end of service, and that of the 53% who sought support upon return, only half were able to receive treatment, including those on college campuses (Church, 2009).

Peer counseling has been proven as an incredibly effective tool to provide a form of mental health services on campus to military-connected students. Programs like Combat2College utilize a *strengths-based* approach to draw on military values of solidarity and community in order to create safe spaces within a campus for veterans; the goal is that Combat2College participants will empower one another to find access to the resources they need (Church, 2009). By pushing for better infrastructure and specialized counselors, student veteran organizations advocate for supportive—as opposed to ambivalent or challenging—campus climates for veterans (Summerlot et al., 2009).

These are a few examples of safe space-making within student services. In their responses to results from campus-based studies and the growing concerns of student-run organizations, institutions increasingly create inclusivity resource centers along with safe space programs (Rankin, 2005). The purpose of these centers and programs is to provide separate spaces for marginalized individuals to feel protected and to connect with others, free of both real and perceived risks.

Safe space programs were initially started with goals similar to those of community-based safe spaces. In addition to providing a physical low-risk space, these programs allow for a chance to better understand the risks faced by certain marginalized identities on campus—such as undocumented and international students experiencing a culture of fear about travel, first-generation students experiencing bias in participating in student activities, or students of color feeling targeted by discriminatory groups on campus—and allow for idea-sharing on how to improve overall campus climate for all students.

Perhaps borrowed from the broader LGBTQIA and activism communities, the term *safe space* was quickly paired with LGBTQIA resource centers on campus. In addition to a safe space for queer members, LGBTQIA centers have expanded resources to allies through so-called safe zones, popularized in the early 2000s (Poynter & Tubbs, 2008; Yost & Gilmore, 2011). Safe zones offered a place for allies, students, faculty, and staff to acquire new skills in order to engage with and advocate for the LGBTQIA community. In this way, the terms *safe space* or *safe zone* referred to a necessary component of the training model—and not a description of current campus climate. Safe zone participants are typically self-identified allies; many are campus leaders who have completed ally training on how to be welcoming to marginalized students. The presence of safe zones serves as a marker for marginalized students to more easily identify those on campus who are more aware of and willing to assist with the unique challenges they face.

Safe zones are one of the few consistent programs on campus planned to promote dialogue, while specifically drawing out biases, with the purpose of pointing out why and how these biases may be harmful to the campus community. Conversely, classroom-based brave spaces are often designed to promote challenging dialogue without promoting an anti-oppressive agenda. The evolution of the field of student affairs largely surrounds inclusivity efforts regarding marginalized students. Additional evidence on safe spaces within student support services is provided in the “Safe Spaces That Work on Campus” section.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Institutions of higher education, particularly those with discussion-based learning environments, have invested in classroom and teaching improvement methods for years. Fields such as social work, education, sociology, psychology, and student affairs often rely on Socratic-based teaching methods through which the diversity of a student body can actually build on the learning experience (Holley & Steiner, 2005; Kumashiro, 2000). A challenge within these fields has been in developing brave spaces to foster respectful but challenging dialogue within the classroom.

Unlike the use of the term *safe space* within movement-building, academic theory, and student support services, a brave space in the classroom is often removed from the context of physical space. In other contexts, safe spaces were protected by marginalized groups and their locations were kept guarded and carefully disclosed only to trusted individuals to maintain their isolation and privacy. The classroom here is neither an undisclosed location nor a place where marginalized individuals are the focus; rather, the goal

of a safe classroom space is a climate where students are willing to “risk honesty” so that an authentic exchange of ideas becomes possible. Unlike the other origins of a safe space, in the classroom protection is a secondary, rather than a primary, goal. In this way, the term serves to provide warning and allow for mental preparation for all participants that the conversations may be personally challenging but are meant to foster shared understanding. Additional evidence on brave spaces in the classroom is provided in the “Safe Spaces That Work on Campus” section.

SAFE SPACES WITHIN THE CURRENT CULTURAL CLIMATE

The cultural context of safe space provides a lens into the fundamentals of the safe space debate. Spurred by the inception of Black Lives Matter in 2013, the term *safe space* has been reappropriated within conversations about freedom of expression—without a clear understanding of the nuanced context from which the term has been drawn. Some parties took the term from its use within student services, others took it from campus-based activism, and still others drew it from one context while applying it to a completely different one. Assumptions and concerns rose from multiple definitions and understandings of the term, all under the umbrella of *safe spaces* within the debate.

Several counterprotests regarding campus speakers and events in the past few years have sparked controversy. In 2015 student groups rallied to shut down a production of “The Vagina Monologues” at Mount Holyoke College because the play excludes the transgender community. Similarly, several commencement speakers—including Condoleezza Rice at Rutgers University and Christine Lagarde at Smith College (Kristof, 2015)—have been canceled after student protests. Protests that took hold in fall 2015 in response to allegations of racism led to the corresponding resignation of former University of Missouri President Timothy M. Wolfe (Howell, 2016). Counterprotests have also led to the cancellation of scheduled guest speakers Milo Yiannopoulos and Ann Coulter at the University of California, Berkeley (Levin & Wong, 2017).

Some onlookers view these responses as disproportionate in magnitude to the issues that sparked them and argue that student activists have weaponized social justice as a tool to quell freedom of expression. Others argue that the free speech argument acts as a way to uphold the dominant narrative and detracts from the actualization of racial justice and the expansion of diverse thought on college campuses.

It is within this context of canceled speakers and events—and the ensuing free speech debate—that administrative leaders have begun to view safe spaces as a threat to

intellectual growth. However, while these incidents may coincide with a conversation on building safe spaces, the practice of safe space-making is not the true cause of the conflict. As discussed in the following pages, properly understood and implemented safe spaces on campus work to promote intellectual diversity and freedom of expression.

SAFE SPACES THAT WORK ON CAMPUS

Arguments presented by Ellison (Grieve, 2016) and Schapiro (2016) move toward an important conversation on best practices. Do identity-specific centers really support students and help them grow? Do safe spaces within classrooms foster broader learning for all students? Or, do they halt the learning process, stifling some voices while allowing those with more mainstream opinions to dominate?

Organic safe space-making within the campus community has played a pivotal role in movement-building. Through its long-standing battle against ignorance, higher education has provided safe spaces for marginalized individuals and their allies to discuss necessary, if challenging, topics and has given rise to necessary social movements that have advanced our democracy toward a truer definition of equality and justice for all. Historically, campus-based activism has created a voice for the voiceless and within this context fosters an environment of inclusivity so that all students may participate. These safe spaces work.

Current campus activism builds from the days of marginalized groups meeting in seclusion and is a natural extension of the recognition that their voices are not represented in broader conversations. Activists protesting speakers who uphold what they believe to be discriminatory, dehumanizing, or regressive views draw attention to broader society's acceptance of dominant narratives without providing opportunities for rebuttal or dialogue with marginalized communities or individuals. In this view, protesters working to silence or prevent speakers recognize that those opinions and viewpoints have myriad other avenues and media through which their opinions are already represented. Rather than continue to present these views unchallenged, protesters provide a counternarrative and gain access to platforms otherwise unavailable to them. A March 2017 *Inside Higher Ed* article titled "The Controversial Visit You Didn't Read About" noted that nondisruptive protests are by far the norm in terms of campus activism and are often used to educate other students on oppressive practices and to cultivate communities of inclusion (Jaschik, 2017).

Intentional safe space-making continues to be important for student protection outside of advocacy, as campus climate surveys repeatedly document that many students

experience racial- and gender-based violence and feel unsafe and isolated on campus (Cantor et al., 2015). Violence against marginalized students continues, and students continue to experience a lack of voice due to dominating opinions and attitudes that crowd them out. This ends up negatively affecting the most vulnerable students on campus. Students of color express that they are placed in positions where they have to combat systemic racism while simultaneously working to educate their peers—a situation that ultimately has an impact on their own socioemotional well-being (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

NASPA's study on culturally engaging campus environments found an association between student success rates and providing marginalized students with supplementary resources and tools in order to thrive (Museus & Smith, 2016). However, the kinds of resources provided are important. Not only do student support services need to provide spaces for marginalized students, but students need to feel less alienated and isolated. Therefore support services, similar to campus activism, must aim to create cultural shifts toward inclusivity. Safe spaces alone do not alter cultural climates; rather, safe spaces provide for just one facet of intentional programming designed to promote inclusivity. For instance, a strengths-based approach proves useful with military-connected students, while within the LGBTQIA community, research shows a need for an LGBTQIA-friendly campus, evidenced by representation on campus through students, faculty and staff; within curricula; and present through a robust LGBTQIA student life (Rankin, 2005). Additional challenges to creating environments inclusive of intersecting identities exist as well.

Further, oppressed students are unlikely to experience truly risk-free spaces, even within the confines of resource centers, on friendly campuses, or in the most inclusive classrooms. Barrett (2010) and Stengel (2010) outlined critiques to the use of the word *safe* in conjunction with *space*, noting the inherent risk faced by certain vulnerable populations, such as those with psychiatric disabilities or who are part of a group targeted at large, such as students from the seven countries under the Trump administration Executive Order No. 13769 (2017) "Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States" meant to limit travel. Barrett (2010) and Boostrom (1998) also identified ambiguity around the term *safety* and argued that it may be impossible to clearly define what this means in the classroom.

Along this vein, several campuses have adopted the term *brave spaces* using the five elements described earlier by Arao and Clemens (2013), in an effort to better articulate what an achievable space of inclusivity and challenging

dialogue looks like. The brave space concept has popped up specifically within service-learning and community engagement programming. Students excel in brave spaces through “transformative learning and disorientation” (Stanlick, 2015, p. 117) achieved by critical reflection activities within unfamiliar contexts. For instance, the Global Citizenship Program at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania created brave spaces through collaboration with a local refugee resettlement agency, to allow students to become aware of their own agency in the community in respect to that of the refugee population nearby. The purpose of the activity was to provide perspective for the students and allow for a challenging reflection of self, as a result of intentional disorientation (Stanlick, 2015). The service-learning model here also introduces a conversation about risk for vulnerable individuals within a space, such as the risk of exploitation of refugees brought into a classroom for the sake of a learning opportunity.

A brave space model would allow all participants, including refugees who have opted in, to dialogue, to opt out and remain free from attack or excessive scrutiny. Still, the conversation is complicated by the inclusion of vulnerable or oppressed group members who may not feel they have the power and access to opt out of a space. Dawson-Threat (1997) offered a series of practices formulated through student development theory for faculty and staff in working with Black male students to enhance the classroom experience. Most of these practices center on making classroom and learning benefits accessible for individuals who may feel they are a part of a hostile environment. In the case of Black male students, Dawson-Threat (1997) suggested that a better understanding of racial identity development would help a professor know when to encourage more passive (journaling) or active (storytelling) forms of participation. Wing Sue, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera, and Lin (2009) used qualitative analysis to conclude that White faculty are most effective with difficult dialogue on race when they don’t discourage the sharing of emotions or personal fears, engage with classroom dialogue, and actively foster brave spaces (termed as *safe spaces* in the article).

A survey of a sample of 121 undergraduate and graduate students in social work at a 4-year university exemplifies the value of brave spaces (termed *safe spaces* within the article itself) within the classroom environment (Holley & Steiner, 2005). Students who attended classrooms that operated as brave spaces found that they were able to excel both in terms of academics and in terms of personal growth and self-awareness. Students also described which kinds of classroom characteristics made up perceived safe and unsafe spaces. A brave space classroom had an unbiased

professor who often adopted ground rules, peers who spoke openly and honestly, and seating arrangements that allowed everyone to see each other. An unsafe space had biased or overly opinionated professors, peers who seemed afraid to speak up, and row-style seating (Holley & Steiner, 2005). This study similarly aligns with the five elements of brave spaces outlined by Arao and Clemens (2013).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This foundational paper first discussed the use of *safe spaces* and *brave spaces* within the contexts of movement-building, academic theory, student support services, and the classroom, and then set up the current cultural climate, where safe spaces have been portrayed by the media as part of a larger dialogue on freedom of expression, before moving into examples of safe spaces that work on campus. NASPA offers a series of recommendations that student affairs professionals may use in tandem with the information provided to better understand and explain the use of safe spaces:

- ◇ **Adopt the use of the term *brave spaces*.** Language is important and may contribute to misconceptions of the goals of creating inclusive environments. This paper has shown that a safe space is never actually safe. The concept of a brave space encompasses all of what the sectors discussed in this work regard as safe spaces, but clarifies that these environments are challenging and that students are expected to participate within them. Administrators, faculty, and staff can replace use of the term *safe space*, as it pertains to class-based dialogues, with that of *brave space*. By using the term *brave space*, faculty are able to distinguish an inclusive classroom discussion from programming on campus that commonly provides respite space for traditionally marginalized communities.
- ◇ **Encourage intersectional conversations about movement-building, advocacy, and the role of campus environments to better understand the evolution of safe spaces over time.** Activism and advocacy has been rooted within college campuses for decades. This is highly tied to those values in higher education that promote free-flowing thought and exchanges of ideas. Administrators, faculty, and staff should become educated on the history of movement-building and why lending voice to the once voiceless on college campuses has become an integral part of our nation’s progress. Institutions may consider adopting training on the role of higher education in the policymaking process so administrators, faculty, and staff can be fully aware of the importance of full student participation.

- ◇ **Refer to campus activities—including multicultural, LGBTQIA, and women’s rights organizations—that likely have working definitions regarding safe spaces on college campuses.** Institutions need not create additional tools and guides, as plenty already exist. While Ellison did not allude to additional resource availability (Grieve, 2016), the University of Chicago’s Center for Identity and Inclusion (2017) currently has a solid agenda on making the campus more inclusive for marginalized students, and the creation of safe spaces is a part of this model. Administrators should consult with students engaged in campus activities for marginalized students as well as work with the department of campus activities in order to begin a collaborative dialogue on how to ensure that brave and safe spaces continue to enhance freedom of expression on campus.

Safe spaces have a long and illustrious history within the advocacy community and as a tool for marginalized communities. Safe spaces and brave spaces are just one means to combat systemic oppression experienced within the classroom and on campus. Safe spaces and brave spaces must be used together to ensure the academic success of marginalized students and the personal growth and development of the entire student body. Institutions offer safe space support services for students that prove effective in tandem with holistic changes to campus culture. Brave spaces are used today in classroom settings as a mechanism to create supportive environments so that all students may equally participate in challenging dialogue. The creation of brave spaces is never without the risk of discomfort for those participating, but they allow for a more enriching and extensive dialogue while simultaneously providing tools of support for those who are most vulnerable. The purpose in providing these tools is to enhance—not detract from—participation and academic growth. Finally, campus administrators and faculty are recommended to assess their own comfort in providing such spaces and challenge themselves and their campuses to move the needle forward on these critical issues.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Responding to Campus Protests: A Practitioner Resource

This issue of *Legal Links* provides students affairs professionals with a resource for addressing campus protests. *Legal Links* is complimentary for NASPA voting delegates and can be accessed by logging in to your NASPA membership. Members who are not voting delegates and non-members may purchase *Legal Links* in the [NASPA Bookstore](#).

“Protecting Free Speech on Campus: State Legislation”

This NASPA blog post summarizes recent state legislation (as of February 2017) intended to reaffirm constitutional rights regarding freedom of speech on college campuses and discusses possible implications for student affairs professionals.

2017–2020 Public Policy Agenda

The current Public Policy Agenda outlines NASPA’s dedication to the link between policy and practice regarding: student success and college completion; student safety and wellness; cost of higher education, student debt, and borrower protections; inclusive opportunities for access and success in higher education; and civic engagement and freedom of expression.

Policy Briefing Series

The NASPA Policy Briefing Series is a free online professional development opportunity provided by the NASPA Research and Policy Institute. Briefings are held monthly and cover a plethora of current higher education policy issues that fall under the Public Policy Agenda.

NASPA'S RESEARCH AND POLICY INSTITUTE

NASPA's Research and Policy Institute (RPI) intentionally links research, policy, and effective student affairs practice in support of student success and the strategic priorities of the association. RPI generates scholarship and conducts policy analysis to articulate student affairs contributions to student success, learning, and development; interpret information that advances practice and policy conversations; and connect the many research and policy activities of NASPA members to increase reach and impact.



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