

# CARDOZO LAW

## Statement on Neutrality

As the dean of Cardozo School of Law, I am dedicated to the principles of academic freedom, freedom of speech, and open inquiry. I am also influenced by core Jewish values that require us to seek truth, honor the infinite worth of every human being, and act with compassion toward all. I strive to create a learning environment that encourages students to establish facts, think critically, and form opinions for themselves. We are a vibrant community comprised of individuals of varied backgrounds, identities, and perspectives. We value every community member and welcome diverse views, the respectful exchange of ideas, and rigorous intellectual discourse.

These values counsel against me, in my capacity as dean, or any leaders in the law school administration taking positions or making statements on behalf of the law school concerning public issues or geopolitical events. My decision to adopt a neutrality policy was not made lightly. It emerged after renewed, careful consideration of how to best uphold our values in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. My team and I examined the potential impact of making statements on behalf of the law school and concluded that a public statement suggests an “approved” institutional view and can discourage and chill the holding or expression of other legitimate views, which is at odds with the law school’s fundamental commitment to open inquiry and discussion. The opposite norm—that certain significant events require a statement from the school—could easily cause upset and hurt to segments of our community when no statement on a particular event is issued.

In moments of crisis, the institution’s role is to educate and support: to create opportunities and fora for deep discussion, to encourage students to strengthen their abilities to engage in constructive discussions about difficult issues, and to offer support to those in our community who are directly or indirectly affected by the crisis. Accordingly, law school administrators will not make statements on crises or national or geopolitical events other than those directly related to the mission or functioning of the law school.

**Dean Melanie Leslie**

Dr. Samuel Belkin Professor of Law

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