Defiance College Statement of Principles

Pertinent to the U.S. Department of Education's "Call to Action" dated October 31, 2026

Defiance College, chartered on March 23, 1850, is a 501(c)(3) organization in Ohio. As a 501(c)3 institution, we are bound by our mission and required to be politically neutral. We are not a selective institution and we serve a region that would otherwise be an education desert. Like most small, independent colleges, our business model and leadership functions are very different from large public institutions, highly selective "elite" universities, and regional community colleges. The operating budget has two deliverables - one in the fall; one in the spring - off-cycle changes that are costly, affect our ability to manage accordingly which is why the HEA was helpful when changed and implemented regularly (see discussion later).

As a learning organization, we believe it is important to let differing views be heard, reflected upon, discussed, and melded with our own views and values while juxtaposed with the facts and current research. Doing so helps everyone expand their thinking and their perspective; it allows them to put themselves in someone else's shoes whether in the current day or an historical event. We all know we do not have to agree to be able to listen for better understanding, a concept that is pivotal for learning. Listening to opposing views allows audience members to learn something new or be able to see an issue from a different perspective. As a 501(c)(3) organization, we are required ***not*** to take a political position, therefore we have adopted a balanced stance where differing opinions can be expressed. Similarly, while each member of our campus community, including the administration and board of trustee members have our personal politics, they do not negate our requirement to be mission-driven. What must prevail is the rule of law alongside the safety and health of our campus community. Rule of law, generally, "prevents the arbitrary use of power." In America, the rule of law is guided by the *U.S.Constitution*. It is translated to regulatory and compliance responsibilities through various legal requirements such as the Higher Education Act (1965, last amended in 2008), Title IX, Title IV, Title VI standards, as well as various professional organizations such as NACAC and NACUBO. DC's *Academic Catalog (UG and GR)*, *Faculty Handbook*, and *Employee Handbook* all outline expectations, policies, procedures, and processes for ethical engagement with students and colleagues; additionally, various training courses required by law or insurance carriers are offered both in-person and online for up-to-date employee knowledge about sexual harassment, cybersecurity, and FERPA to name a few.

What colleges do - especially small, independent colleges in small rural communities - is facilitate understanding, resource coordination, and service to their communities. To share a few examples from just the fall of 2026 in the Northwest Ohio region:

- 700 people participated in a Suicide Prevention walk organized by a local woman who lost her son to suicide held on campus in fall 2026;
- Students from the Carolyn Small Honors Program supported the registration and vendor desks of a national conference held on-campus in October 2026;
- DC undergraduate students and a faculty member collected information for the Williams County Health Department Survey, analyzed the data, and made a presentation during the Summer Undergraduate Research Symposium. Data was also presented during the Community Health Assessment in Fall 2026 by a faculty member.
- DC begins each fall term with a Day of Service conducted by the entire first year class of over 300 students contributing over 900 hours in one day to the surrounding community.

DC's mission drives decision-making at all levels of the institution. Our mission serves as our "statement of principles." To meet our mission, we must be and stay relevant in our 'industry' of higher education. The mission of Defiance College, adopted in 1984, and recently reaffirmed by the Board of Trustees in May of 2026 is:

TO KNOW
We believe that the liberal arts form a broad basis for all learning. We affirm that academic excellence demands a committed search for truth, competency in research and other problem-solving methods, the ability to synthesize knowledge from many sources, and a capacity for self-directed learning.

TO UNDERSTAND
We provide opportunities for students to perceive and make connections between the intellectual realm and the world. We strive to develop awareness of and sensitivity to global interdependence and diverse cultures.

TO LEAD
We are committed to the betterment of the community, the nation, and the world through the development of leadership skills and abilities. We create opportunities for students to initiate and facilitate beneficial action in and out of the classroom and encourage self-reflection on the role of the dedicated leader.

TO SERVE
We encourage our students to be of service to their fellow students, their chosen fields of study, their communities, and the world. We provide opportunities for students to transform society through civic engagement along with application of their knowledge and understanding to service.

Long before the Call to Action letter, Defiance College was listening to its external stakeholders, including legislators, and the college has been addressing concerns that were heard. The chart below should succinctly summarize important principles at the college:

<table>
<tr><th>Questions from the Secretary of Education, Washington DC 20202 in a letter, “A National Call to Action to University Presidents and Governing Boards”, August 3, 2026</th><th>DC Statement of Principles with a Brief Explanation</th></tr>
<tr><td>1. The opacity of university admissions has caused allegations of favoritism, unjust outcomes, and illegal discrimination. Every prospective student is legally entitled to equal treatment regardless of protected characteristics, and credible accusations of covert attempts to evade the Supreme Court’s ruling in Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard will persist as long as admissions criteria remain shielded from public view. How will your institution ensure that admissions criteria are transparent and wholly described to prospective applicants? And how will your institution ensure admissions decisions are based on merit, achievement, and your university’s educational purpose?</td><td>Principle: DC believes in transparency.

Our admissions standards are clearly stated.
• Rolling admissions.
• Automatic admission: 2.6 GPA (B average) from high school
• Conditional admission: 2.0 - 2.5 HS GPA
• Test Optional although either ACT or SAT is required for some science classes including for pre-health profession; otherwise test optional
• Personal statement is not required

Yield Rate for Fall 2026: 15.7% While getting more selective, DC is not considered highly selective

Best practices are used for Financial Aid awards. Discount rate in 2026 was 54.8% down from 66.2% in FY2024

DC provides approximately $10 million in institutional aid to students annually

Average student loan amount upon graduation: $29,000
Default rate: 1.1%

See #4 below for a discussion about affordable tuition since we have kept tuition flat since Fall 2024</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. Institutions must encourage an ethic of free speech and foster a thriving marketplace of ideas, guided by open inquiry and honest debate. The collision of opposing viewpoints is necessary to advance learning and prepare students for the duties of citizenship. How will your institution protect the free exchange of ideas, wide-ranging debate, and openminded campus discourse? And how will you guarantee that unruly and violent protestors do not harass students or disrupt classes, research, public lectures, and campus</td><td>Principle: DC follows the rule of law and best practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

DC prides itself on having balanced conversations so that students may understand a vast diversity of opinion and viewpoints juxtaposed with facts. Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech are often conflated. They are not the same. Our policies for Academic Freedom follow the AAUP standards and these were reviewed and definitions made clear in AY 2026-27; we follow the Constitutional guidance for Freedom of Speech. Our policies say that those disrupting an event or speech will be the ones disciplined, as attendees have a right to hear a speaker and learn by listening to those who have a different perspective from the one they hold.

<table><tr><th>Feature</th><th>Academic Freedom</th><th>Freedom of</th></tr></table></td></tr>
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operations?

		Speech
Main Goal	Advance knowledge, truth, and learning	Protect individual liberty and debate
Who?	Professors and researchers at academic institutions	All members of the public
Locale	Classrooms, labs, and academic papers	Public spaces, media, private life
How?	Expertise in an academic discipline, professional standards	No professional training required
Limitations	Subject to expert rules and peer review	Limited by defamation, fraud, inciting violence

3. Some academic disciplines and departments have subordinated the scholarly pursuit to political and social goals, as documented in the recent Report on the State of Scholarship in the Humanities and the Humanistic Social Sciences. When disciplines skew toward one side of the ideological spectrum, the truth-seeking function of the university suffers and public trust declines. **How will your institution encourage intellectual pluralism in all its academic units? How will your faculty hiring and evaluation practices support academic vitality and ensure that all relevant perspectives are taken seriously? And how will your school ensure the research enterprise is dedicated to advancing knowledge, deepening understanding, and serving the American people who fund it?**

Principle: DC adheres to a belief that balance is important for learning in classrooms where students come from various backgrounds, political ideologies, religions, and cultural traditions.

We teach them **HOW** to think, **not what** to think. Our college is small and the administration (including the President) and faculty work closely together. In an era where there is much trepidation to share opinions, our faculty teach in their disciplines, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences, to ensure that critical discourse in classes is balanced. For instance, to appreciate the U.S. Republic, it is important to understand other forms of government, including pure democracy, and the detriments and benefits of them.

A proven effective pedagogy called *Reacting to the Past* is used in a required first year course. This high impact practice is shown to be an effective delivery of research, speaking and writing (Carnes, Mark. 2018).

4. The price of some postsecondary

Principle: DC is and will continue to be affordable.

degrees seems out of reach for many American families—in significant measure due to ever-rising administrative costs and other expenses unrelated to core university functions. Rates of student attrition and student loan defaults are too high, and universities should take responsibility for ensuring better outcomes. Schools should be transparent about the value of their degrees and prioritize offering education that fosters employment. **How will your institution ensure that families can access affordable, high-return, degrees? What can your school do to contain costs, improve pricing transparency, and ensure that every academic program equips students to repay their loans?**	For Fall 2024, DC decreased its tuition 25% to **$28,500**. It has not changed the tuition rate since then. For Fall, 2026, DC published fees of $1,100 so that students would know exactly what their cost of attendance would be. New student enrollment has increased 103% since Fall 2023. Defiance College also launched the *1850 Promise* program starting for the fall class of 2024. For eligible students who can commute from 11 area counties in Ohio, DC offers a debt-free education. At DC there is a belief that a college education is an investment in the future with college graduates earning at least $1 million more in wages over a life-time than those with a high school diploma. While student loan debt is a cost and a household expense, it is an investment in students' and society's future. By current law we cannot counsel students not to borrow; however, we do suggest that they only borrow up to the cost of attendance and no more. As noted in **#1** above, average student debt in 2026 for DC graduates is **$29,000** and its default rate is an admirable **1.1%**. Note that most school's default rates increased after the deferment offered during the coronavirus pandemic ended. DC's did not. On average, DC provides **$9.8 million** annually in institutional student aid. Core college functions at DC have grown over the years, even though it operates with a lean staff which has decreased over the last decade. Core functions include administering federal, state, and accrediting standards and regulations which continue to expand amid the demands of teaching and learning while the need to assess both has also increased. As part of our career readiness programming, **Jacket Journey**, Defiance College offers financial literacy education to students. Workshops on budgeting, personal finance, retirement and debt management are standard offerings to students.
5. High academic standards are essential because rigor and learning go hand-in-hand, equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in	**Principle: DC has been proactively planning for AI use and combating abuse since AY 2023-24.** Defiance College is committed to leading our institution through a thoughtful, strategic, and holistic campus-wide

life and contribute to their country and community. Artificial intelligence has upended traditional methods of teaching and assessing student learning. Some schools recently have announced steps to combat grade inflation. **How will your institution incentivize rigor in the age of AI, combat grade inflation, and prioritize excellence in teaching and learning?**	response to this transformative technology. At DC we have embedded the appropriate use of AI into the curriculum with three guiding principles: intentional use; safe use, and ethical use. Employers tell us they want to hire graduates who have experience using AI effectively and ethically. At the center of our effort is a deliberate cultural strategy. We are establishing a campus culture driven by experimenting, learning, and sharing. Guided by the philosophy of regional industry leader Tom Bush, CEO of Actual Reality Technologies, we believe effective AI adoption must be "smart and not sneaky" - prioritizing upfront transparency, clear data handling, critical thinking, collaboration, and continuous innovation. Grounding our efforts in documented organizational behaviors toward technology adoption—including enthusiasm, anxiety, ethical and legal concerns, and generational differences—we follow Dr. Shonda Gore's PinLeader™ Path to address fear through education, empower early adopters, listen to perceived barriers, and align all actions with our institutional mission. Our strategic planning accounts for traditional adopter typologies across campus, recognizing our community composed of Leaders (8%), Explorers (36%), Followers (46%), and Laggards (10%). Through ongoing dialogues, our faculty continue to center their engagement around three core questions: What can AI do? What can it not do? and What shouldn't it do? To operationalize this culture, DC instituted a dual-task-force model in Fall 2024: the Task Force on Artificial Intelligence in Academic Affairs (TFAIA) and the Task Force on AI, Campus. Structuring our strategy around MIT's five pillars - understanding AI, inclusive stakeholder engagement, ethical prioritization, continuous evaluation, and staying current - we conducted a comprehensive joint survey in Spring 2025 across faculty (60%), staff (39%), and students (5%). The findings revealed that 75% of faculty and staff support formal GAI guidelines, while 86% advocate for dedicated data privacy protocols. The findings of the surveys were used to inform Task Force on AI (TFAI) work during last year that included training for campus stakeholders, including students. The survey findings and continued work last year are guiding our implementation during AY 26-27, Defiance College follows a structured 4-Step AI Readiness Roadmap: 1. Awareness: Establishing foundational understanding, addressing ethical and legal implications, job security questions, and risks such as hallucinations and

impersonations.

2. Training: Developing practical capabilities in prompt engineering to amplify writing, speaking, thinking, and research.
3. Skill Development: Scaling adoption across introductory, intermediate, and advanced users, solving institutional challenges, and reinforcing critical thinking, ethical judgment, and systems thinking.
4. Strategic Development: Implementing policies, data security standards, clear expectations, and institutional rewards and incentives.

Furthermore, we align our strategic goal-setting with an AI-adapted S.M.A.R.T. framework focusing on Strategic and ethical alignments, Meaningful transparency, Augmented human capability, Responsive feedback and adaptation, and Trustworthy Automation. In our academic programs and career readiness initiatives, GAI literacy and ethics have been embedded across all First-Year Experience (FYE 100) sections since Fall 2025, with an advanced pilot in our Honors Program. We offer specialized coursework, such as "Design thinking and AI" and "Introduction to AI in Business" while faculty members in Graphic Design, Cybersecurity and Computer Science explore further curriculum adaptation. In direct response to regional employer feedback gathered at our Jacket Summit 2025, we have expanded student workshops, integrated LinkedIn Learning GAI certifications, and are incorporating more AI sessions into our annual Jacket Days (a component of Jacket Journey) career readiness conference for students in 2027.

To support our faculty and staff, we deliver monthly hybrid "Lunch and Learn" training sessions and maintain a centralized Canvas (LMS) resource hub overseen by our Director of Academic Technology and Online Learning and who is also the Director of the Defiance College Center for Effective Teaching (DCCET). Established in 2018, DCCET since 2018 offers faculty opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions and planning on best practices in teaching and learning, including AI, its application and use.. Support includes grants to guide the use of Open Education Resources (OER), workshops on pedagogical innovations, one-on-one consultations with colleagues and more.

In sum, Defiance College remains dedicated to preparing our students and workforce which will be AI-augmented in the future through ethical, transparent, and rigorous education.

6. University-sponsored research can drive economic growth and deliver medical innovation and technologies with vital military applications. University leaders must ensure that the research enterprise is oriented toward advancing the U.S. national interest—not our adversaries'—by refusing gifts with problematic conditions and ensuring that foreign actors do not unduly influence academic programming, research personnel, researcher assignments, or student admissions. Institutions must also ensure that malign foreign actors do not gain access to sensitive research or technology. **How will your school protect academic programs from foreign influence and safeguard the integrity of the research enterprise?**	**Principle: DC follows its own policies and procedures; its board uses its *Bylaws, Commitments and Responsibilities,* and *Investment Policy Statement* to govern itself and the college. Outside influences, including foreign influences, to wrangle particular initiatives and personal agendas are eschewed.** DC is dedicated to its mission and ensures conflict of interests are documented and managed. DC has no foreign donors; foreign investments are minimal and are aggregated funds rather than particular investments of one or a few foreign holdings. DC also participates in state and federal programs to provide a college education to U.S. military veterans. Defiance College supports military-connected students through a combination of academic, financial, and career-focused resources. Eligible veterans pursuing careers in education may receive assistance through the Empower VetEd initiative, while all military-connected students have access to VA education benefits, including the GI Bill® and Yellow Ribbon Program at the federal level. DC was a founding member of the State of Ohio's Purple Star program designed to support military families. The college provides personalized support through the Registrar's Office, career readiness programming, and the Veterans Resource Center to help ensure a successful transition to college and beyond. The large federal grants (Title III (FIPSE); CDS) DC has received have been used in the spirit they were intended - to Strengthen DC as an institution where rigorous student learning occurs in more up-to-date classrooms, laboratories, and academic functional spaces (library, student success center, etc.) as a result of these grants. DC has not sought nor has it accepted foreign dollars for any research use. The board's Investment Policy Statement (last approved May 2024) as it relates to international investment says: **a.** Overall holding in foreign common shares and ADR*'s of foreign companies should not exceed 25% of overall equity holdings. No Foreign companies may be held whose ONLY market is maintained outside of U.S. securities markets, such as listed exchanges and NASDAQ. **b**. The only permitted use of forward foreign currency contracts is for the direct purpose of hedging against fluctuations in currency exchange rates. *American Depositary Receipt

7. American taxpayers invest hundreds of billions of dollars into higher education every year. American universities must put Americans, and American interests, first. That means prioritizing American students and faculty, orienting the research enterprise to support the country's economic and security needs, and putting American societal success ahead of global commitments. **How will your institution answer this national call to action? How can your campus and faculty advance American security interests, deliver academic programs that meet urgent workforce needs, and contribute materially to the Nation's prosperity?**	**Principle: DC augments classroom learning with professional skills through a unique career readiness program, Jacket Journey.** (DC's mascot is the Yellow Jacket) The federal government is our largest donor, yet DC, as an independent institution of higher education, only benefits from the federal investment when students choose our institution. Thank you for investing in our students! As an institution classified by Carnegie to be a *Professions-focused Baccalaureate; Small classification - Medium Earnings*, DC is a teaching institution rather different from its large, research focused counterparts. At DC we provide the unusual opportunity for undergraduate students to conduct research alongside their faculty members; they have a chance to present their research findings in the spring semester of each academic year at the McMaster Symposium and Academic Colloquium. Many students present at state or national professional conferences, and occasionally at international conferences. The unique career readiness program more fully described in the narrative below, **Jacket Journey**, is specifically designed to equip students with the professional skills they will need to be value-added from the first day in their first professional position (or graduate school) which are meant to enhance their academic skills and learning. The NACE competencies underpin the scaffolded learning around which **Jacket Journey** was designed. Developing and improving emotional intelligence is also a backdrop for learning in **Jacket Journey** the social skills needed for professional life.
Other Key Measures Related to the "Call to Action" and DC's Statement of Principles/Mission Statement	**96%:** Five-year average placement rate (employed or in graduate school 6 months after graduation) **Financial Value Transparency (FVT) & Gainful Employment**: At this time Defiance College's largest undergraduate programs exceed the salary analysis provided under FVT.
	$21 million endowment (in June 2026)
	83% of faculty have the appropriate terminal degree for their discipline (Fall 2026; benchmark is 70%)
	First generation: In 2026, 50% of students are first generation. The actual percentage varies from year-to-year with an average of 50%.
	Graduation rate: - 4 year/6 year

	4-year gradation rate: 25% 6-year graduation rate: 30% Student attrition is a complex issue, especially in the post pandemic era alongside other vehicles that encourage transferring out of one school to another such as the athletic transfer portal. DC continues to assess students and improve issues of concern based on their semesterly feedback.
	Overall Giving: $2,295,400 annually - five-year average (FY 2022-2026)
	The Mankey Administration is transparent (2016 - present). The president has a set of expectations shared with all employees upon their arrival. There is also an expectation to ask "How Might We" when an idea or problem presents itself in order that DC get to the "right" answer rather than the easy one. The President also offers six in-person sessions called *Campus Connections* for all employees to discuss the state of the college; to provide data about enrollment, fundraising, retention, etc.; to enlist experts from on- or off-campus to discuss current matters of interest; and to share changing legislative requirements from federal, state, and accrediting body entities.
	Strategic and Integrated Plan (SIP), 2026 - 2046: *DEFIning Its Future: Building Capacity for Defiance College*: After a year-long process of engaging internal and external stakeholders, the DC Board of Trustees approved the SIP which looks out 20 years, thus is truly strategic rather than operational. The mission (above) is clearly stated. Other components of interest are below and this link will take the reader to the SIP website: https://www.defiance.edu/strategic-integrated-plan/ **Vision:** As a mission-driven institution, Defiance College intentionally designs well-rounded and experiential learning opportunities that empower graduates to be career-ready, ethical, engaged, inclusive and adaptable in an ever-changing world. Defiance College: Regionally-ranked. Nationally recognized. Locally responsive. **DC's Brand:** *DEFIne Your Future:* Affordable. Accessible. Academics. Athletics. **Purpose:** Transformative Learning and Adaptability for Life - Prepared Professionals. - Community Leaders. - Civic Stewards.

	Values: Student-Centered. Innovative. Career-Prepared. Inclusive. Relevant. **Three Overarching Strategies are Defined and Goals states**: 1. Distinctive Programs and Experiences 2. Foundational and Financial Sustainability 3. Community Engagement and Partnerships
	DC's Public Description used in press releases: Chartered in 1850, Defiance College is a non-profit, independent, liberal arts-based institution in Northwest Ohio, offering more than 40 undergraduate programs of study as well as graduate programs in education and business. Defiance College has received national recognition for its educational experience of service and engagement, enhanced by an award-winning and unique career readiness program called **Jacket Journey** to help students learn career skills in and out of the classroom. The College mission has four pillars: To Know, To Understand, To Lead, and To Serve. For more information about Defiance College, visit www.defiance.edu

Two nationally unique programs attuned to learning and career readiness are distinctive at Defiance College: The McMaster School for Advancing Humanity and Jacket Journey.

McMaster School. The McMaster School was funded by a $6 million gift from a former board chair of the college. Harold McMaster, and his wife, Helen, were very successful in the glass industry. They'd traveled the world, and were fortunate enough to see places on many peoples' bucket lists; they also noted those historic and notable places juxtaposed with abject poverty. The president of DC at the time, Dr. James T. Harris, III, worked with the McMasters to fund a school that would enable students to engage in community-based research locally, nationally, and around the world to both improve the human condition while assisting residents of chosen McMaster School sites to achieve their goals. The gift levels the field for students as the cost to those selected to participate is the fee to secure a passport. A study conducted over the first 15 years demonstrated over 429 research projects in 11 countries involving over 100 community partners. An example of a community-based research project would be working with women in Tanzania and Belize to write business plans, secure micro-loans, and establish micro businesses (many of which have been functioning since 2013). Research about the McMaster School experience among its former and current participants notes that adaptability is one of the most common themes (skills) over its 25-year history. In today's rapidly changing world, adaptability is, indeed, a helpful tool to possess.

Jacket Journey. Jacket Journey, a career readiness program named for the college's yellow jacket mascot, is a prime example of a signature program that evolved through collaboration. It wasn't a pre-conceived goal. Nor was it a whim or a gimmick. It resulted from a culmination of things – a presidential listening tour and many follow up conversations, reading books to help guide our

pathway out of an abysmal situation of inattention to all things that represent excellence in higher education, as well as workshops and interactions with higher education and business leaders. An inkling of an idea collectively developed into a stellar academically-based program that addresses three problems:

1. A false belief that a liberal arts-based education does not prepare students for work and life
2. That students do not know how to articulate what they have learned (therefore employers rightly believe graduates do not have the skills)
3. Customarily, career readiness programming is optional and not required

Jacket Journey is unique because the faculty voted to make it required and for credit - it carries one credit hour per year, culminating in four total credits. The program's impact is already evident as evidenced from a study conducted by the EVP/Academic Dean during the fifth year of Jacket Journey with three significant outcomes:

First Outcome:

A. Students "buy into" Jacket Days and are engaged in their future career aspirations.
B. 94% of the DC student body actively participated in Jacket Days each January over the past 4 years. This includes 84% of students completing Jacket Days requirements for GEN ED course sections.
C. 99% of seniors completed their financial literacy exit counseling either during Jacket Days or with the Institute for Career Readiness and Lifelong Learning (Institute) staff during AY 25-26.
D. 74% of the student body completed the requirements to earn the Suitable App badge for GEN courses during AY 25-26.

Second Outcome:

A. Alumni/ae are supporting Jacket Days.
B. Sessions offered during J-Days have grown from 75 to 128 over the past four years.
C. 53% of sessions in 2026 were offered by DC alums.

Third Outcome:

A. The Institute is leading Jacket Journey to help realize our 96% job and graduate school placement rate average over the past 5 years.
B. Outside of Jacket Days, the Institute staff held 295 individual meetings with students regarding their career readiness during AY 25-26.
C. The Institute and other campus offices offered 106 workshops on career readiness during AY 25-26 outside of Jacket Days.
D. The Institute offered 23 financial literacy workshops outside of Jacket Days.

Furthermore, though designed and deployed before formal legislative critiques emerged, Jacket Journey directly addresses contemporary concerns from lawmakers regarding how institutions of higher education intentionally prepare students for successful employment.