

12.01.99.C0.02 Academic Freedom



Revised: June 17, 2024

Next Scheduled Review: June 17, 2029

[Revision History](#)

Procedure Summary

Institutions of higher education exist for the common good. The common good depends upon a free search for truth and its free expression. Hence, it is essential that the faculty be free to pursue scholarly inquiry without undue restriction and to voice and publish conclusions concerning the significance of evidence considered relevant. The faculty must be free from the corrosive fear that others, inside or outside the university community, because their vision may differ or threaten their professional career or the material benefits accruing from it. This procedure defines academic freedom and explains the associated faculty rights and responsibilities.

Procedure

1. Each faculty member is entitled to full freedom in the classroom in discussing the subject which they teach, including the absence of pressure from within or outside the institution or from regulations which violate the First Amendment in insisting on orthodoxy in the classroom. Faculty members are also entitled to freedom in the classroom and/or when acting in their official role as a faculty member in discussing controversial matters related to the course subject or area of expertise, respectively.
2. Exercise of professional integrity by a faculty member includes recognition that the public may judge their profession and institution by statements made by the faculty member. Therefore, when speaking or acting as a private person, the faculty member should strive to be accurate, to exercise appropriate restraints, to show respect for the opinions of others, and to avoid creating the impression that they speak or act for the academic unit (e.g., college, school, library) or university.
3. Faculty members have constitutionally protected rights as citizens to freedom of expression on matters of public concern. False statements made with knowledge of their falsity or in reckless disregard of the truth are not entitled to constitutional protection. A faculty member's comments are protected even though they may be highly critical in tone or content, or erroneous, but such statements are not protected

free speech if they substantially impede the faculty member's performance of daily duties, destroy the ability to work cooperatively, or damage the morale of a department or academic unit.

4. False statements and/or falsification of scholarly work made with knowledge of their falsity or in reckless disregard of the truth are not entitled to constitutional protection. Furthermore, public statements made without sufficient foundation may call into question the fitness of the faculty member to perform their professional duties. In such cases where the facts are in dispute, hearings will be conducted in accordance with the formal complaint process outlined in university procedure *32.01.01.C0.01, Complaint and Appeal Process for Faculty Members* and must use an investigation committee.
5. The controlling principle is that a faculty member's expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member is unfit for their position, and that said expression of opinion rarely bears upon the faculty member's fitness for job performance.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

System Policy [12.01, Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Tenure](#)

University Procedure [32.01.01.C0.01, Complaint and Appeal Process for Faculty Members](#)

This procedure supersedes:

- *12.01.99.C1.02, Academic Freedom*

Contact Office

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