



Academic Freedom and Responsibility

Purpose

Institutions of higher education are operated for the common good, requiring an uninhibited search for truth and open expression. Faculty members have legally protected rights and privileges. They are free to pursue scholarly activity without undue restriction, and to voice and publish individual conclusions concerning the significance of evidence that they consider relevant. Faculty must be free from the fear that others, inside or outside the university community, may threaten their professional careers or the material benefits accruing from it.

Persons Affected

This policy applies to faculty.

Policy

Faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom to discuss relevant topics. Topics introduced in the classroom should be related to the course subject. Faculty must be free from institutional censorship or retribution when speaking, writing, or acting as a citizen of the nation, state and community, subject to the principles of academic responsibility. Faculty should make it clear that they are not speaking for the institution.

Faculty members are expected to adhere to principles of academic responsibility which include:

- Maintaining competency in their fields of specialization and professional behavior. Evidence of this competence should be displayed in teaching, scholarship, and service, including on-campus and off-campus contexts.
- Faculty should be judicious when using controversial material in the classroom and should introduce such material only if it has a clear relationship to the subject field.
- Faculty should strive to communicate accurately and respectfully; however, faculty who make erroneous or critical statements may still be protected.
- When speaking or acting as private persons, faculty must avoid creating the impression that they speak or act on behalf of the university.
- Faculty statements that either substantially impede the performance of daily duties or materially and substantially interfere with the regular operation of the institution are not protected under this policy.

When guest lecturers are utilized in a course, the instructor-of-record will ensure that the principles of academic responsibility are upheld. Except when officially absent from class, the instructor-of record will be present during the delivery of a guest lecture.



Related Statutes or Regulations, Rules, Policies, or Standards

Tex. Educ. Code § 51.354(5)

Regents' *Rules and Regulations*, Rule 31004, Rights and Responsibilities of Faculty Members

SFA HOP 02-308 Faculty Code of Conduct

SFA HOP 01-402 Conflicts of Interest, Conflicts of Commitment, and Outside Activities

Responsible Executive

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Forms

None

Revision History

September 1, 2023 (original)