

Academic Freedom and Responsibility

Original Implementation: August 1, 2000

Last Revision: July 23, 2019

Institutions of higher education are operated for the common good, requiring an uninhibited search for truth and open expression. Faculty have legally protected rights and privileges. They are free to pursue scholarly inquiry 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.

Faculty 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 are expected to adhere to principles of academic responsibility.

The principles of academic responsibility include:

1. Faculty must maintain competence 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.
2. 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.
3. Faculty should strive to communicate accurately and respectfully; however, faculty who make erroneous or critical statements may still be protected.
4. When speaking or acting as private persons, faculty must avoid creating the impression that they speak or act on behalf of the university.
5. Faculty statements are not protected free speech if they either substantially impede the performance of their daily duties or materially and substantially interfere with the regular operation of the institution.

Cross Reference: Faculty Code of Conduct (7.11); Ethics (2.6); Tex. Educ. Code § 51.354(5)

Responsible for Implementation: Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Contact for Revision: Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Forms: None

Board Committee Assignment: Academic and Student Affairs Committee

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