

Policy: PAC-14

Subject: Academic Freedom and Responsibility

– **Annotated: See Footnotes¹**

Approval Date: 11/04/85

Revision Date:

PURPOSE:

To outline the conditions of academic freedom and responsibility for faculty and staff members who teach or perform research.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Academic freedom is the right of **members of the academic community** freely to study, discuss, investigate, teach, conduct research, publish or **administer as appropriate** to their respective roles and responsibilities.² **It is the responsibility of administrators to protect and assure these rights** within the governing framework of the institution. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should **be careful to present the various scholarly views related to their subject³** and to avoid introducing into their teaching **controversial or other matter which has no relation to their subject.⁴** Teachers are entitled to **full freedom** in research and in the publication of the results therefrom, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties.⁵

ASSURANCES:

However, **academic freedom should be distinguished clearly from constitutional freedom**, which all

¹ As indicated at the end of this policy, its source is not the AAUP's "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure," but rather a publication of the "American Association of State Colleges and Universities, adopted November 9, 1971." This American Association of State Colleges and Universities document also appears to be the source (at least in part) of the policy at the University of North Texas. See <http://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-0-1>.

² The last phrase of this passage ("administer as appropriate") applies to administrators rather than to faculty members. Likewise, the "owners" of academic freedom in this policy are not just teachers or faculty members, but are "members of the academic community." This language (and that in Institutional Commitments, below, recognizes that "administration" of the University is a form of academic freedom.

³ The admonition that faculty members "should be careful to present the various scholarly views related to their subject" does not appear in the AAUP Statement of Principles, nor is it included in either the AAUP Statement on Professional Ethics or Morehead State's PAC-12 (Professional Ethics). Section 1(a) of Kentucky HB 158 (Academic Bill of Rights) would have provided students "The right to a learning environment in which there is access to a broad range of scholarly opinion pertaining to the subjects they study. The fostering of a plurality of scholarly study shall be a significant institutional purpose in the humanities, social sciences, and arts." Does PAC-14's admonition to "present the various scholarly views" require MSU biology professors to teach creation science or English professors to teach the theory that someone other than Shakespeare was the author of his plays?

⁴ This last statement is almost verbatim from the AAUP Statement of Principles.

⁵ Whereas faculty members in the classroom should refrain from discussion of matter that has "no relation to their subject," their "full freedom" with respect to research and publication is subject only "to the adequate performance of their other academic duties."

citizens enjoy equally under the law.⁶ Academic freedom is an additional assurance to those who teach and pursue knowledge, and, thus, properly should be restricted to rights of expression pertaining to teaching and research within their areas of recognized professional competencies. Beyond this, expressions by members of the academic community should carry no more weight or protection than that accorded any other citizen under the guarantee of constitutional rights: that is, outside of one's professional field, one must accept the same responsibility which all other individuals bear for their acts and utterances. In these cases, there is and should be no guaranteed immunity from possible criticism under the guise of academic freedom; however, when members of the academic community speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but as persons of learning they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances so they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others and should indicate that they are not institutional spokesperson.

The concept of academic freedom must be accompanied by an **equally demanding concept of academic responsibility**.⁷ The concern of the institution and its members for academic freedom safeguards must extend equally to requiring responsible service, consistent with the objectives of the institution.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS:

Institutions of higher education are committed to open and rational discussion as a principal means for the clarification of issues and the solution of problems. In the solution of certain difficult problems, all members of the academic community must take note of their responsibility to society, to the institution and to each other and must recognize that at times the interests of each may vary and will have to be reconciled. **The use of physical force, psychological harassment, or other disruptive acts**, which interfere with institutional activities, freedom of movement on the campus, or freedom of all members of the academic community to pursue their rightful goals, is the antithesis of academic freedom and responsibility. So, also, are **acts which, in effect, deny freedom to speak, to be heard, to study, to teach, to administer and to pursue research**.⁸ It is incumbent upon members of the academic community to be acquainted with their individual responsibilities, as delineated by appropriate institutional statements.

FACULTY COMMITMENTS:

The universal responsibility of the teaching faculty member is effective teaching. A proper academic climate can be maintained only when members of the academic community meet their fundamental responsibilities regularly, such as preparing for and meeting their assignments, conferring with and advising students, evaluating fairly and reporting promptly student achievement and participation in group

⁶ This statement (and much of what follows) acknowledges (implicitly) that academic freedom is not a constitutional right. Indeed, to the extent that that academic freedom is a right at all, it is an institution-specific contract right, in that institutional policies on academic freedom are generally held to be incorporated in the institutions' faculty employment contracts.

⁷ The policy's insistence on academic responsibility is consistent with the AAUP's assertion that "membership in the academic profession carries with it special responsibilities," in the first of the 1970 Interpretive Comments on the 1940 Statement of Principles.

⁸ In addition to recognizing "administration" as a form of academic freedom, these sentences state more forcefully and comprehensively the admonitions in the AAUP's Statement on Professional Ethics that professors should not exploit, harass, or discriminate against students or colleagues. However, the AAUP's admonitions concerning exploitation, discrimination, and harassment do not appear in MSU's PAC-12 policy on Professional Ethics (which in most other respects adopts the AAUP Statement verbatim).

deliberations which contribute to the growth and development of students and the institution. **All members of the academic community also have the responsibility to accept those reasonable duties assigned to them within their fields of competency, whether curricular, co-curricular or extracurricular.** Additionally, the concept of "institutional loyalty" still has a proper place within the academic community and imposes the further **responsibility on all members of the academic community to attempt, honestly and in good faith, to preserve and defend the institution and the goals it espouses, without restricting the right to advocate change.**

PROTECTION, DEFENSE AND PROMOTION OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM:

Administrators must protect, defend and promote academic freedom, must **assure that members of the academic community fulfill their responsibilities** and, in addition, must recognize that they have special responsibilities for which they are held accountable – namely, the marshaling of human, physical and financial resources in order to realize institutional goals.⁹

(Source: American Association of State Colleges and Universities, adopted November 9, 1971).

⁹ Note that part of administrators' obligation to protect, defend and promote academic freedom is an obligation to "assure that members of the academic community fulfill their responsibilities." Presumably those duties would include the faculty commitment "to accept those reasonable duties assigned to them within their fields of competency, whether curricular, co-curricular or extracurricular."