

STOCKTON UNIVERSITY



POLICY

Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Tenure

Policy Administrator: Assistant Provost

Authority:

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Statements on Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Tenure by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, November 1971.

Stockton University as a member of AASCU endorses the following statements.

"Introduction

The purposes of these Statements are to clarify and to promote understanding and support of academic freedom and responsibility, and academic tenure.

Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not necessarily to further the specific interests of either the individual or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for and the exposition of truth and understanding wherever and whenever they may be found.

The freedoms granted by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States are indispensable to a democratic society. Within the academic community, the vigorous exercise of these freedoms by its members -- to participate in the democratic process of government as citizens, to learn and to teach what scholarship suggests is the truth, to question even what is believed to have been settled, to publish without fear of reprisal what scholarship has discovered -- gives vitality to democracy and is the essence of academic freedom. Without these freedoms, academe cannot fulfill its duty to society and may, indeed, become an instrument for the suppression of 'freedom. These truths, long accepted and reaffirmed when tested, need continuous defense and recommitment.

By its nature, no freedom is absolute. Academic freedom is no more absolute than any other. It is protected in order that academic people may perform a vital social role, not in order to create a privileged class. It does not afford any special protection to those who themselves violate academic freedom. Responsibility is the counterpart and condition of academic freedom. The academic community which asks protection from outside interference in order to perform its mission must not tolerate sabotage of that mission by its own members.

Governing boards are responsible for establishing overall policy and interpreting the institution to the public and the public to the institution. Faculty, as the professional staff, whether their roles be instructional or administrative, must reserve freedom for all in the academic community, as well as interpret it to the public. Those who teach and those who administer must be faithful to the canons of their calling, utilizing the best their disciplines have yielded, in order that their commitment may be respected by others. Each must play his role under self-imposed constraints which preserve the fabric of, civilized life. All must protect the right of dissent, including dissent from dissent. However, no one can be accorded the privilege, under any pretext, of exercising his self-defined rights at the cost of those rights which by common consent and usage belong to all.

Academic freedom and responsibility are inseparable, and must be considered simultaneously; they are shared by all members of the academic community. Tenure, however, is a specific provision of employment which may be accorded to those members of the academic community who qualify for it. Therefore, academic tenure should be considered separately from academic freedom and responsibility.

These Statements are concerned primarily with the faculty members (teachers, researchers and administrators) of the academic community. However, it is recognized that students also must enjoy academic freedom, and must realize that this freedom carries concomitant responsibilities.

Academic Freedom and Responsibility

Academic freedom is the right of all members of the academic community freely to study, discuss, investigate, teach, conduct research, publish and administer. It is the responsibility of administrators to protect and assure these rights within the governing framework of the institution. The teacher is entitled to freedom in the classroom discussing his subject, but he should be careful to present the various scholarly views related to his subject and to avoid presenting unrelated material. The teacher is entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results therefrom, subject to the adequate performance of his other academic duties.

However, academic freedom should be distinguished clearly from constitutional freedom, which all citizens enjoy equally under the law. 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.

The concept of academic freedom must be accompanied by an equally-demanding concept of academic responsibility. 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, in order for the institution to achieve its goals.

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, to colleagues, and to students and must recognize that at times the interests of each may vary and will have to be reconciled for the institution to achieve its objectives. The use of physical force, psychological harassment, or other disruptive acts, which interfere with institutional activities, freedom of movement on 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. Because specific responsibilities may vary among institutions, each member of the academic community should be acquainted with his responsibilities. Specific responsibilities should be delineated by appropriate institutional statements.

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

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 by their superiors—namely the marshaling of human, physical and financial resources in order to realize institutional goals.

Academic Tenure

The traditional protection afforded by tenure against the capricious dismissal of teachers for invalid reasons has its validity today as it has served well in the past, Tenure is not, nor Should it be intended, however, as a shield for mediocrity, incompetence, or academic irresponsibility, and faculties at each institution should clearly and explicitly establish minimum levels of professional performance and responsibility expected and should enforce them impartially.

Those institutions that elect to include a provision for academic tenure in their regulations should have clear statements as to the conditions that must be met for tenure to be awarded and for appointments to be terminated.

Academic tenure is not prerequisite to academic freedom, for academic freedom is the right of all members of the academic community as is responsibility the obligation of all. Rather, tenure is a specific provision of employment which may be accorded to those members of the academic community who qualify for it, and is a means of making the teaching profession attractive to persons of ability. Therefore, it contributes to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society."

Approval History:

	Date
Board of Trustees	3/04/75