

Protecting the Future of Academic Freedom During a Time of Significant Change

Fall

2020

Topic:

Professional Standards

Committee:

Educational Policies Committee

INTRODUCTION

Academic Freedom Defined

Academic freedom is a fundamental concept that exists to ensure that institutions of higher education function for the public good and that colleges are constructed on the foundations of genuine trust. For over a century, members of The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) have been agile guardians, careful stewards, and erudite experts regarding the principle of academic freedom and its application in the faculty profession. In their historic “Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure”^[1] from 1940, the AAUP provides the definitive definition of academic freedom. Their major parameters state that the privilege and responsibility of academic freedom guarantees faculty “freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject,” “full freedom of research and in the publication of the results,” and the freedom from “institutional censorship or discipline” in their extramural speech. These three foundational principles protect discipline-based academic work from being corrupted or conducted for any other reason than the advancement of the public good.

¹ See Appendix 1 or <https://www.aaup.org/file/1940%20Statement.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations for Local Academic Senates:

1. Local senates should create a statement on academic freedom, in addition to local board policy, that delineates the specific issues and parameters of academic freedom for faculty.
2. Local senates should provide consistent and ongoing professional development for full- and parttime faculty and senate leaders—curriculum, program review, policy chairs, senators, etc.—in the principles and tenets of academic freedom, including onboarding new faculty.
3. Local senates should work to review, revise, and strengthen shared governance processes, policies, and procedures in relation to academic freedom so that shared governance protects dissenting opinions in the decision-making process.

Recommendations for Local Academic Senates in Collaboration with Union Colleagues:

1. Local senates should work with union colleagues to develop due process around violations or perceived violations that involve academic freedom issues, including a duly constituted—appointed or elected—faculty committee to review and recommend action.
2. Local senates should collaborate with union colleagues on codifying the protection and parameters of academic freedom in contract in light of faculty evaluations, curriculum, online instruction, dual enrollment, open educational resources, guided pathways, and other relevant issues.
3. Local senates should work with union colleagues to train faculty on engaging in faculty evaluations in light of academic freedom.
4. Local senates should clearly delineate and provide justification for adjunct faculty participation in shared governance in order to support union efforts to negotiate appropriate compensation.
5. Local senates and union colleagues should review AAUP resources and recommendations.

RESOLUTIONS:

[Adopt the Paper Protecting the Future of Academic Freedom in a Time of Great Change](#)