

1.C Senate Assembly Statement on Academic Freedom

In January 2010, the Senate Assembly endorsed a statement that defines the standards of academic freedom as follows.

Academic freedom is the liberty that faculty members must have if they are to practice their scholarly profession in accordance with the norms of that profession. Academic freedom is not a term or a condition of employment; rather, it is based in the institutional structure of this and other universities and is fundamental to their common mission of promoting inquiry and advancing the sum of human knowledge and understanding. Although some aspects of academic freedom are also protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, academic freedom exists, independent of any external protection, as a basic prerequisite for universities to fulfill their mission to our society. Academic freedom is most commonly vindicated by individual faculty members, but remains first and foremost a professional prerequisite of faculty members as a group.

Academic freedom includes the following specific freedoms:

- *freedom of research and publication. Within the broad standards of accountability established by their profession and their individual disciplines, faculty members must enjoy the fullest possible freedom in their research and in circulating and publishing their results. This freedom follows immediately from the university's basic commitment to advancing knowledge and understanding. Restrictions on research and publication should be minimal and unobtrusive.*
- *freedom of teaching. This freedom is an outgrowth of the previous one. Faculty members must be able not only to disseminate to their students the results of research by themselves and others in their profession, but also to train students to think about these results for themselves, often in an atmosphere of controversy that, so long as it remains in a broad sense educationally relevant, actively assists students in mastering the subject and appreciating its significance.*
- *freedom of internal criticism. Universities promote the common good not through individual decision or bureaucratic calculation, but through broad-based engagement in the scholarly endeavor. Faculty members, because of their education and their institutional knowledge, play an indispensable role as independent participants in university decision making. By virtue of this role, they are entitled to comment on or criticize University policies or decisions, either individually or through institutions of faculty governance.*
- *freedom of participation in public debate. Both within and beyond their areas of expertise, faculty members are generally entitled to participate as citizens in public forums and debates without fear of institutional discipline or restraint, so long as it is clear that they are not acting or speaking for the University.*

Since academic freedom derives from the institutional structure of American universities, it is qualified in various respects. However, when academic freedom is so qualified, it is of critical importance that restrictions be drawn up and implemented with substantial faculty input, in such a way as to minimize infringement of academic freedom. In large part, this goal should

be accomplished by ensuring that institutional discipline of faculty members is in proportion to the severity and persistence of misconduct, and by insisting that alleged offenses be handled with appropriate standards of due process, including, wherever possible, the judgment of competent peers. For the rest, however, it must be recognized that contemporary threats to academic freedom are constantly evolving. This University – its faculty, administration, and students alike – must exercise constant vigilance in resisting such threats, whether they arise within the university or from outside.

[Senate Assembly Statement on Academic Freedom](#), including commentary.