

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The primary purpose of a university is to promote the exploration of ideas and the discovery and dissemination of knowledge and understanding. The university is to be an open forum for ideas and issues to be raised, challenged, and tested.

Academic freedom is the cornerstone of a university. Intellectual ferment is absolutely dependent upon academic and intellectual freedom. Freedom in teaching is fundamental for the protection of both faculty and students in teaching and learning. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth.

The 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretative Notes¹ from the American Association of University Professors provides a nationally recognized definition of academic freedom, its protections and its responsibilities.

Academic Freedom

(a) Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.

(b) Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial subject matter which has no relation to their subject.² Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of appointment.

(c) College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

In the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the California State University and the California Faculty Association (1998 – 2001), the parties³ recognize explicitly the role that academic freedom and academic responsibility play in the academy. The Preamble of that document states:

¹ The footnote from the 1940 Statement states: “The word “teacher” as used in this document is understood to include the investigator who is attached to an academic institution without teaching duties.”

² The footnote from the 1970 Interpretative Notes on the AAUP Statement reads: “The intent of this statement is not to discourage what is “controversial.” Controversy is at the heart of free academic inquiry which the entire statement is designed to focus. The passage serves to underscore the need for teachers to avoid persistently intruding material which has no relation to the subject.”

³ By virtue of its ratification by the CSU Board of Trustees, the following statement contained within the Collective Bargaining Agreement is an expression of Trustee policy.

It is the purpose of these parties in entering this Agreement to promote high standards of education in the CSU. The CSU shall support the pursuit of excellence and academic freedom in teaching, research, and learning through the free exchange of ideas among faculty, students, and staff.

The parties recognize that quality education requires an atmosphere of academic freedom and academic responsibility. The parties acknowledge and encourage the continuation of academic freedom while recognizing that the concept of academic freedom is accompanied by a corresponding concept of responsibility to the university and its students.

It is the policy of California State University, Fresno that all faculty members, regardless of their employment status, should enjoy the privileges and exercise the responsibilities inherent in academic freedom as defined by the AAUP statement. Librarians, counselors, coaches, teaching assistants and graduate assistants who are involved in the teaching and learning processes also enjoy the same protection and responsibilities within the context of their obligations.

Tenure constitutes the strongest procedural safeguard of academic freedom and individual responsibility, and as such, is essential for the maintenance of intellectual liberty and high standards in teaching and scholarship.

Reference: AAUP: The 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretative Notes

Recommended by the Academic Senate
Approved by the President

September 2001
October 5, 2001