

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

- A. Necessity of academic freedom: Sequoias Community College District is committed to student learning and success. The District recognizes that protecting academic freedom is essential to achieve this mission. The District further recognizes that academic freedom is included within the freedom of expression and is necessary to the pursuit of knowledge within academic disciplines. These freedoms are essential elements of teaching and student learning.
- B. Definition: Academic freedom is the foundational principle that affirms the rights of scholars, educators, and students to pursue intellectual inquiry, engage in open discourse, and contribute to the advancement of knowledge within the institution, free from undue external interference or censorship.
- C. Context: As a form of freedom of expression, academic freedom exists within the general framework of the United States Constitution, the California State Constitution, requirements of the California Education Code, California Community College regulations, District policy, and official course descriptions. This freedom of expression shall be maintained in all media (printed, oral, visual, and electronic) and in all interactions among students, faculty, staff, and administration, subject to applicable law. All faculty members shall enjoy the protections offered by this policy. No faculty member shall be mistreated, disciplined, reassigned, or have his/her assignment terminated for any reason that violates the protections of this policy.
- D. Academic freedom and responsibility: All faculty members shall be free to pursue instruction, grading, scholarship, policy discussions, and public discourse in an environment free of intimidation and censorship. While academic freedom is a fundamental principle, it comes with the responsibility to maintain professional standards, uphold ethical conduct, and contribute positively to the educational community. Faculty, staff, and students are expected to engage in intellectual discourse with respect and a commitment to the pursuit of truth. All faculty members shall exercise their academic freedom in a manner that promotes the District's mission and that abides by the Institutional Code of Ethics (AP 3050). The merit of academic ideas, theories, arguments, and views shall be measured against the established standards of relevant academic and professional organizations.
- E. Inquiry and instructional freedoms: Academic freedom includes freedom of inquiry and instruction for every faculty member, including freedom in presenting and discussing subjects related to his/her academic discipline. Academic freedom also includes, but is not limited to, freedom to:

1. Inquire about, present, and explore difficult and controversial material that is relevant to the official course outline of record;
  2. Express differences of opinion with and among students, faculty, staff, and administration on academic matters;
  3. Demonstrate, teach, and defend critical thinking skills and intellectual honesty.
- F. Campus events: Every faculty member shall have the freedom to organize or participate in campus events, and the responsibility to do so in a manner consistent with the District's mission, the Institutional Code of Ethics, and the established standards of relevant academic and professional organizations.
- G. Scholarship: Every faculty member is a member of a learned profession and shall have the freedom to use his/her/their professional scholarship and present this scholarship in any academic discourse.

See AP 4030 for specific administrative procedures regarding challenges to academic freedom and due processes for faculty members.

References: Title 5 Section 51023

Adopted: January 11, 2016  
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