

ACADEMIC FREEDOM DISPUTES

- A. Due process in academic freedom disputes between students and faculty **and District (non-faculty) managers/Administrators. The parties should follow the grievance procedure as outlined in the respective COSTA or COSAFA Master Agreement.**

~~In an academic freedom dispute **between** a student and a faculty member **and District (non-faculty) managers/Administrators**, the parties must first attempt to achieve an informal resolution. **If a resolution cannot be achieved informally, the faculty member who believes their academic freedom has been violated by the District has the right to grieve, as outlined in the COSTA Master Agreement, Section XVII, and the COSAFA Master Agreement. Section X. There shall be no reprisals of any kind taken against any participants or representatives because of participation in such processes.**~~

- B. Due process in an academic freedom disputes between faculty members

Informal Process

In an academic freedom dispute between two or more faculty members, the parties must first attempt to achieve an informal resolution. Such an attempt may include a meeting between faculty members and the appropriate division chair(s) and/or area dean(s). **should begin with a meeting between the faculty members and the division chair(s); area dean(s) may be included in the meeting or subsequent meetings of the same nature.**

Formal Process

If an informal resolution is not achieved **through the informal process**, the parties involved should consult with the President of COSTA and the President of the Academic Senate in order to achieve a satisfactory resolution to the dispute. **or one or more of the parties in the dispute is a division chair or an Academic Dean, the parties will begin the formal process.**

An Academic Freedom Review Committee will be created. The Academic Freedom Review (AFR) Committee shall be comprised of:

- **A representative from Academic Senate**
- **The Dean of Human Resources, or designee**
- **A representative from COSTA, and/or a representative from COSAFA**
- **One faculty member chosen by each party of the dispute**

1. Each party must summarize their position in writing, specify the faculty member they would like to have nominated to the AFR Committee, and send copies to the Academic Senate President with a request for a formal review by the AFR Committee. The Academic Senate Representative will within 30 days arrange a meeting and immediately forward the positions to the AFR Committee members.
2. The AFR committee members will review the materials, arrange a meeting to hear from the disputing parties, may do its own fact-finding, and make a decision regarding the matter within 60 days of receipt of the materials. The decision will be communicated immediately to all of the parties in the dispute by the Academic Senate Representative.
3. No individual who is a party in the dispute may participate in the decision-making process.
4. In the event of a tie, the committee will continue to debate the issue until a resolution is found. A 30-day extension will be granted for such purpose.

- C. Due process in an academic freedom disputes between faculty and District/~~non-faculty managers~~. students or any other party not covered in section A or B

~~Any faculty member who believes his/her academic freedom has been violated by the District has the right to grievance as outlined in the COSTA Master Agreement, Section XVII. There shall be no reprisals of any kind taken against any participants or representatives because of participation in such processes.~~

In an academic freedom dispute between faculty and students or other parties not covered in A or B, the parties must first attempt to achieve an informal resolution. Such an attempt may include a meeting between the student or other party, the faculty member, and the appropriate division chair or area dean.

If an informal resolution is not achieved, a student may file a formal grievance as outlined in AP 5530.

If a faculty member believes that their academic freedom is being threatened by students, other organizations, or members of the public who do not represent the District, the faculty member should contact the Academic Senate President and/or the COSTA/COSAFA President. They will request a timely meeting with the appropriate Academic Administrators and/or the Superintendent/President to determine how to best ensure and protect academic freedom.

~~D. Due process when faculty believes there is a legitimate threat to academic freedom.~~

~~Any faculty member who thinks that his/her academic freedom is being threatened by students, faculty or staff, other organizations, or members of the public who do not represent the District should contact both the Academic Senate President and the President of COSTA. Either the Academic Senate President or the President of COSTA can request a timely meeting with appropriate academic administrators and/or the Superintendent/President of the District to discuss how to best assure and protect academic freedom. This procedure may take place exclusive of any formal grievance.~~

~~*Some of the language and procedures outlined in this procedure are adapted from the Pasadena Area Community College District's procedures for disputes regarding academic freedom.~~

References: Title 5 Section 51023; ACCJC Accreditation Eligibility Requirement 20;
ACCJC Accreditation Standard I.C.7

Adopted: January 11, 2016

BP/AP APPROVAL PROCESS		
Author	30-Day	Board
La Serna; Academic Services	10/4/24	n/a

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 professional scholarship, and present this scholarship in any academic discourse.
- H. ~~Public discourse. "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 might judge their profession and their 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" (Section C, "Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom," approved by the SCCD Academic Senate April 14, 1999).~~

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

~~*The text of this BP has been adapted from the Sonoma County Junior College District's policies on academic freedom.~~

References: Title 5 Section 51023; ~~ACCJC Accreditation Eligibility Requirement 20; ACCJC Accreditation Standard I.C.7~~

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AWARDING OF CERTIFICATES**A. Certificate Policy**

The College of the Sequoias (COS) will award a certificate to a student who satisfactorily completes the program requirements stated in the college catalog.

For any certificate, a student must complete (a) a minimum of twelve (12) semester units at COS or (b) at least 25% of the units required to earn the certificate must be completed at COS, whichever option is most beneficial to the student.

Students must receive a grade of "C" or higher in each course to successfully complete a certificate.

Exception: For the Certificates of Achievement in CSU GE, a minimum grade of "D-" (0.7 on a 4.0 scale) is required for each course, except for Area A and B4, which must be completed with a grade of "C" or higher. The minimum overall GPA on the CSU GE pattern must be a "C" (2.0 on a 4.0 scale) per CSU Executive Order 1100.

Certificates of Achievement that consist solely of basic skills and/or ESL courses are not permitted.

A. B. Awarding of Certificates

Responsibility for assessing the eligibility for and the processing of certificate awards is shared between Academic Services and **managed by** Student Services ~~in the Evaluations Department~~ Student Services (the Office of Admissions and Records) responsible for coordinating the process **the Admissions and Records Department**. Exception: Certificates for programs governed by specific State requirements (e.g., Police, Fire, Allied Health Programs) are assessed and processed by each specific area.

B. ~~General Skill and Academic~~ C. Certificate Provisions

4. **College of the Sequoias recognizes the following certificates:**
 - a. ~~A Skill Certificate (fewer than 12 **16** units) or~~
 - b. ~~Certificate of Achievement (12 **16** units or more approved by the Chancellor's Office) will be awarded upon the student's completion of a certificate's course(s) and unit requirements as outlined in the college catalog and grades have been posted.~~
 - a. **Certificates of Achievement: Certificates of Achievement are noted on a student's transcript upon successful completion. Certificates of Achievement are at least 8 or more semester units and are approved by the Chancellor's Office.**
 - b. **Skills Certificate: Skill Certificates are not noted on a student's transcript nor are they required to be submitted to the Chancellor's Office for approval. Skill Certificates are under 16 units and are not financial aid eligible.** In order for certificates to be published in the COS graduation program, certificate applications must be approved and returned to the Office of Admissions and Records prior to the deadline established each semester by the Office of Admissions and Records.
 - c. The student becomes eligible for the certificate when the student has completed the application for that certificate in full and provided the **necessary** documentation, such as transcripts, necessary for evaluation of the application.

G. D. Applicant Procedures

1. ~~Students can obtain an application for a skill or achievement certificate online at www.cos.edu.~~
2. ~~Students should complete the application and print out a copy of their unofficial transcript by accessing Banner Web.~~
3. ~~Students will then be responsible for obtaining verification and approval of the application from the division which awards the certificate.~~
4. ~~Once official grades have been posted for all courses being counted for certificate completion, the division will return the completed application to the Office of Admissions and Records for processing.~~
5. ~~Unless by mutual agreement between an academic program or department and the Office of Admissions and Records that a certificate will be printed elsewhere, the Office of Admissions and Records will print the certificates and hold for pickup by the student. If a student chooses to pay for mailing of the certificate arrangements can be made by the student with the Office of Admissions and Records.~~
1. **Students can obtain an application for a Skill Certificate or Certificate of Achievement online at the COS website or in person at the Admissions and Records Office.**
2. **Students can apply for the certificate in the last semester for which courses will be completed.**

3. The application for a Skill Certificate or Certificate of Achievement form can be submitted three ways:
 - a. Using the upload forms system
 - b. Emailed directly to evaluations@cos.edu
 - c. In person at any of our three campuses
 - i. Visalia Campus (A&R, Room 107)
 - ii. Tulare College Center (Building A)
 - iii. Hanford Educational Center (The Hub)

4. After grades have been posted, it may take up to eight weeks to process and print the certificate. All certificates are printed by a contracted printing company and the average turn-around time is 10-14 business days. The certificate will be mailed directly to the student's address on file. Students need to verify that their Mailing Address is up-to-date.

D. E. Determining Award

~~The academic program or department is solely responsible for determining if an award of a college certificate shall be made. After reviewing the applicant list and related applicant materials and determining if an award has been earned, the division chair, or designee from the program or department, will check mark the applicant list next to the name of the student. This indicates the division chair acknowledges to the Dean or other administrator an award has been earned. The Dean or other administrator will then verify and sign that the program or department has "certified" that the award can be issued for that term to the student.~~

The Evaluations Department The Admissions and Records Department is responsible for reviewing and determining if a certificate shall be awarded. If a course substitution or waiver is being used, documentation must be on file with Admissions and Records. After reviewing the application and supplemental documentation (e.g. unofficial transcripts, major sheet, degree audit, course substitution), and verifying that all requirements have been met, the Evaluations Department the Admissions and Records Department will award the certificate and the student will be notified.

E. F. Official Notation on Record

~~Each applicant list and accompanying documentation will be returned to the Office of Admissions and Records. Admissions and Records will update the Banner records of students who have earned awards to reflect this and will store the applicant lists and documentation. Once the award is noted on the student record, it becomes "official."~~

The Evaluations Department will update the student's record to reflect the earning of the certificate(s) and only then does it become "official."

Reference: Title 5, Section 55601
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