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SECTION: Curriculum and Instruction

POLICY TOPIC: Academic Freedom

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I. Introduction

Academic freedom is a right protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

II. Academic Freedom

A society, to remain free, requires citizens to be well-schooled in traditional knowledge and capable of critical evaluation of both new and old ideas. An institution of higher education can best foster growth in a democratic society when both student and teacher can freely participate in the process of sifting and weighing traditional approaches and creating and evaluating new ones. Through the community and the community college, society should provide an academic atmosphere in which questioning is encouraged, where alternatives can be explored, and where one may follow where inquiry leads. It is, therefore, imperative that the educator enjoy full freedom in the discussion of his or her subject and related matters both in and beyond the classroom, the ultimate purpose of such freedom being the pursuit of truth.

In his/her work, the teacher is governed by the policy statements of the College. He/she is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his/her subject, but the teacher should be careful not to introduce into his/her teaching controversial matter which has no relation to the subject.

As a teacher, his/her right to express himself or herself on matters of College policy and procedure shall not be denied or abridged, nor should such an expression jeopardize his/her academic position, as long as he/she expresses himself/herself in a professional and ethical manner. When the teacher speaks or writes as a citizen, he/she should be entirely free from institutional censorship or discipline, but his/her special position in the community obliges him/her to remember that the public may judge the teacher's profession and the institution by the validity of his/her opinions and the manner in which he/she expresses them. When he/she speaks or writes as a citizen, he/she should indicate that he/she is not an institutional spokesperson. Academic freedom, as it relates to faculty, is independent of employee evaluations and re-employment contract offers.

Whenever the teacher speaks or writes as a citizen or as a teacher, he/she should strive to be scrupulously accurate and objective, to exercise appropriate emotional restraint, and to show respect for the convictions of others.