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**F24-6** University Policy, Statement of Academic  
Freedom

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this principle, but the former Board of Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility (BAFPR) was not a consistently effective committee. Its sweeping responsibilities, extended membership, and restricted qualifications resulted in a committee that was difficult to fill and which was torn between its educational and judicial functions. As a result, the BAFPR was divided into two bodies: the Board of Professional Responsibility (see F24-2 Board of Professional Responsibility) and the Academic Freedom Committee. By creating a smaller committee with a sharper focus, Professional Standards sought to create a vibrant, active committee of experts to engage in the continual education of the University on academic freedom issues and provide useful and timely information to faculty, students, and administration when issues related to academic freedom arise.

## 1. Statement of Academic Freedom

### 1.1. In General

- 1.1.1. The primary mandates of a university, the discovery and dissemination of knowledge and understanding, are absolutely dependent upon academic and intellectual freedom. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Freedom in teaching is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the student in learning and of the faculty in teaching.
- 1.1.2. Political attacks on academic freedom, including government attempts to exert control over curriculum, restrict the freedom to pursue all avenues of research, and censor the speech of faculty, have many historical precedents. Such attempts to control teaching and research destroy higher education.
- 1.1.3. San José State University has a responsibility to society to defend and to maintain these freedoms and to ensure that those engaged in academic pursuits can effectively execute their responsibilities. SJSU faculty must remain free of the forces of special interests and political interference if they are to fulfill society's

evaluation, secure continuing employment, can be dismissed only on professional grounds according to due process.

1.2.3. Historically, the indispensability of academic tenure to academic freedom in universities throughout the world has been proven by events in situations where tenure has not existed. We must not forget the lessons of the past but must work to ensure that SJSU continues to fulfill the educational needs of a free society.

### 1.3. Academic Freedom as it Relates to Professional Responsibility

1.3.1. According to the AAUP, Academic freedom “is a professional right extended to members of the profession and is subject to certain limitations. Academic freedom means that faculty are free to ~~eng~~ in the professionally competent forms of inquiry and teaching that are necessary for the purposes of the university. It does not mean that individual faculty members are free to teach or publish whatever they want without repercussions.” AAUP makes clear that the academic freedom of an individual faculty member is subject to matters of professional responsibility, including those related to 1) the collective; 2) professional ethics; and 3) professional competence. AAUP says more about each category below

**“The Collective:** The faculty who are responsible for a particular course of study may share responsibility for determining courses to be offered or texts to be assigned to students. The shared academic freedom to make this decision trumps the freedom of an individual faculty member to assign a textbook that he or she alone prefers.”

**“Professional Ethics:** A faculty member must act ethically in their teaching and research; for example, by following regulations on human subject research.”

**“Professional Competence:** In order to produce and disseminate the highest quality of knowledge in a given field, academics are regulated by other academics who are in a position to judge the work of their peers. A faculty member is not entitled to teach something that their academic peers judge is invalid. For example, teaching that  $2+2=5$  would not be protected; neither would teaching intelligent design in an evolutionary biology class.<sup>4</sup>

Professional responsibility is thus the natural complement of the academic freedom essential to the university's mission. Through their responsible professional conduct, faculty members promote and protect academic freedom. Because faculty members belong to a profession with the rights of ~~gov~~ government, they also have the obligation to establish standards of professional conduct and procedures to enforce them. These standards are set in the SJSU Statement of Professional Responsibility.<sup>5</sup>

1.3.2. Academic freedom is a privilege granted to faculty in return for their obligation to serve the public good, which they do through the advancement of scholarship, the search for truth, and the higher education of our communities. We agree with the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aaup.org/programs/academicfreedom/faqacademicfreedom>

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- 3.3.1. If the AFC has suggestions for policy changes it shall report them to the Professional Standards Committee of the Academic Senate.
- 3.3.2. The Chair of the AFC shall be permitted to address the Professional Standards Committee and the Academic Senate to report ~~issues~~ issues relating to academic freedom.

#### 3.4. Selection.

- 3.4.1. All candidates for membership shall submit statements discussing their expertise and/or interest in academic freedom issues, and (if faculty) a curriculum vitae.
- 3.4.2. Faculty candidates for membership shall be screened by the Executive Committee and approved by the Senate.
- 3.4.3. The Administrative representative shall be designated by the President after consultation with the Executive Committee.
- 3.4.4. The student representative shall be designated by Associated Students after consultation with the Executive Committee.
- 3.4.5. Meetings. The AFC should meet at least once every month during the academic year.