

INFORMATION ITEM

Faculty Council's Academic Freedom Committee: Resolution Dated August 26, 2022

Collin College's Faculty Council recently adopted a resolution on academic freedom on August 26, 2022.

Collin College fully supports the academic freedom of our faculty as provided in Board Policy DGC (LOCAL). The policy emphasizes the principle of academic freedom and academic responsibility. Relevant sections of the Policy DGC (LOCAL) are included below:

All faculty members (full-time and associate) will be entitled to academic freedom and bear a concomitant dedication to academic responsibility. (The faculty subscribes to the principles expressed in the Statement of Academic Freedom and Responsibility adopted February 19, 1982, by the Texas Junior College Teachers' Association, the text of which is appended to and made an integral part of this document.) [See Statement of Purpose on Academic Freedom and Responsibility, below.]

All faculty members enjoy the constitutional freedoms guaranteed to all citizens by the United States' Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Texas. In the classroom, teaching faculty members have the freedom to discuss any controversial matter and to voice opinions within areas of their professional competence. At the same time, they have an obligation to acquaint students with other scholarly opinions on the subject. Outside the classroom, faculty members are free from institutional censorship or discipline for exercising their rights as private citizens to express themselves freely on matters of public concern, to associate with persons or groups as they so choose, and to participate in political or other kinds of activities. When faculty and support staff speak or write as private citizens, however, they must bear in mind that their actions will inevitably be judged by the public and reflect upon their profession and institution. Therefore, faculty and support staff will strive for accuracy, exercise appropriate restraint, exhibit tolerance for differing opinions, and indicate clearly that they are not an official spokesperson for the College District.

The College District accepts the responsibility to foster and to encourage faculty and support staff to exercise their freedoms and to protect against acts that deny freedom of speech and the related freedoms to be heard, to study, to teach, to administer, and to pursue scholarly activity.

Faculty members acknowledge their responsibility to maintain professional competence in their fields of specialization and to be committed to effective teaching and student service.

Statement of Purpose on Academic Freedom and Responsibility

The Board believes that it is essential that the faculty have freedom in teaching, research, and publication. Faculty members must be free from the fear that others might threaten their professional careers because of differences of opinion regarding such scholarly matters. To this end, the College District has adopted the following statement of purpose on academic freedom and responsibility.

The College District, like all other institutions of higher education, serves the common good, which depends upon uninhibited search for truth and its open expression. The points enumerated below constitute its position on academic freedom:

1. Faculty members are appointed to impart to their students and to their communities the truth as they see it in their respective disciplines. The teacher's right to teach preserves the student's right to learn.
2. The mastery of a subject makes a faculty member a qualified authority in that discipline and competent to choose how to present its information and conclusions to students. The following are among the freedoms and responsibilities that should reside primarily with the faculty, with the advice and consent of the appropriate dean of instruction: planning and revising curricula, selecting textbooks and readings, selecting classroom films and other teaching materials, choosing instructional methodologies, assigning grades, and maintaining classroom discipline.
3. Faculty members are citizens, and, therefore, possess the rights of citizens to speak freely outside the classroom on matters of public concern and to participate in lawful political activities.
4. Prior restraint or sanctions will not be imposed upon faculty members in the exercise of their rights as citizens or duties as teachers. Nor will faculty members fear reprisals for exercising their civic rights and academic freedom.
5. Faculty members have a right to expect the Board and the College District's administrators to uphold vigorously the principles of academic freedom and to protect the faculty from harassment, censorship, or interference from outside groups and individuals.

The academic freedom of the College District faculty members will be accompanied by equally compelling obligations and responsibilities to their profession, their students, the College District, and their community. Faculty members will defend the rights of academic freedom while accepting willingly the responsibilities enumerated below:

1. Faculty members will be judicious in the introduction of material in the classroom without forfeiting the instructional benefits of controversy.
2. Faculty members are entitled to all rights and privileges of academic freedom in the classroom while discussing the subjects they teach. No faculty member, however, will attempt to force on his or her students a personal viewpoint intolerant of the rights of others to hold or express diverse opinions. Faculty

members will not act in a manner that is perceived as being abusive, either physically or verbally, by their students.

3. Faculty members will recognize their responsibility to maintain competence in their disciplines through continued professional development and to demonstrate that competence through consistently adequate preparation and performance.
4. Faculty members will recognize that the public will judge their institution and their profession by their public conduct. Therefore, faculty members will always make clear that the views they express are their own and will avoid creating the impression that they speak or act on behalf of the College District or of their profession.
5. Faculty members will recognize their responsibility to adhere to the policies and procedures of the institution. Therefore, faculty members who have differences of opinion with existing or proposed policies or procedures will express these views through the standing committee structure of the College District or their supervising administrators.

The full text of the Faculty Council Resolution is inserted below:

WHEREAS, some Texas state officials have recently pledged to introduce legislation banning the teaching of “critical race theory” and other “divisive” topics in publicly funded colleges and universities;^[1]

WHEREAS, several other states, such as Florida and Tennessee, currently have legislation either pending or passed that aims to limit the instruction of controversial topics;^[2]

WHEREAS, the Collin College Faculty Council has previously voiced its support for the principles of academic freedom, particularly noting that for an environment of active learning to exist, “students and faculty alike [must] be able to explore ideas freely, frankly, and critically without fear of reprisal”;^[3]

WHEREAS, the Texas Community College Teachers Association (TCCTA) has expressed grave concerns about these legislative threats to academic freedom, unequivocally stating that “our organization opposes any policy that would deny faculty and students an environment for open inquiry, unfettered by political pressure” and contends that such efforts “[pose] a threat to accreditation of higher education institutions across the state”;^[4]

WHEREAS, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) along with more than 150 other national and regional organizations, have signed the “Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History” (June 16, 2021), voicing their “firm opposition to a spate of legislative proposals being introduced across the country” and labeling such legislation that targets the teaching of “divisive concepts” as anathema to faculty rights to academic freedom;^[5]

WHEREAS, Collin College policy affirms that “teaching faculty members have the freedom to discuss any controversial matter and to voice opinions within areas of their professional competence” and defines such freedom as “essential” because “the teacher’s right to teach preserves the student’s right to learn,” and avers that the College will “uphold vigorously the principles of academic freedom and to protect the faculty...from outside groups and individuals”;^[6]

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Collin College Faculty Council reaffirms its commitment to espousing principles of academic freedom and entrusting faculty to guide curricular design and content delivery.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Collin College Faculty Council urges Collin College to support the academic freedom statements by TCCTA and SACSCOC, joining other regional and national organizations^[5] to reaffirm their endorsement of faculty to teach and research freely, as it befits their expertise.

^[1] <https://www.chron.com/politics/article/Texas-critical-race-theory-schools-Dan-Patrick-UT-16923077.php>

<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/texas-news/coming-up-dan-patrick-proposes-plan-to-ban-critical-race-theory-in-state-schools/2894264/>

^[2] Florida: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/7/BillText/er/PDF>

Tennessee: <https://time.com/6162489/divisive-concepts-colleges/>

^[3] <http://faculty.collin.edu/ebock/>

^[4] <https://www.tccta.org/2022/03/09/resolution-in-support-of-academic-freedom/>

^[5] <https://www.aacu.org/newsroom/joint-statement-on-legislative-efforts-to-restrict-education-about-racism-and-american-history>

<https://sacscoc.org/news-and-events/joint-statement-on-legislative-efforts-to-restrict-education-about-racism-and-american-history/>

^[6] [https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/304?filename=DGC\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/304?filename=DGC(LOCAL).pdf) , 1, 2.

Resource:

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