



Academic Freedom, Academic Responsibility, and Academic Integrity

Summary

Academic Freedom is essential to faculty's ability to successfully educate their students. It means that as faculty at Golden West College, we should be allowed to perform our professional duties of education and research **free from unnecessary restrictions**. In exchange for being given this privilege, we are expected to do our jobs to the standards of our respective fields and professions. We have a responsibility to uphold the integrity of our institution and thereby educate our students in the most beneficial and effective ways that we have been trained to do.

As faculty at Golden West College, we cannot separate the concept of academic freedom from responsibility and integrity nor from the CFE 1911 agreement with our district regarding Academic Freedom (see below for the full statement from Board Policy 4030 and CFE 1911 Article VI). It means that we have a duty to uphold our professional responsibilities knowing that we will be trusted to do our job as we see fit.

Considerations

It means that we can express ourselves in the most effective ways for teaching our students;

It does not mean that we can say *anything* in our classes, as we should avoid using derogatory and/or hate speech, and we are not allowed to specifically endorse political candidates or say other things that may violate laws.

It means that we can discuss controversial topics in our classes when relevant;

It does not mean that we can discuss any topics we feel like at any time simply because we feel like it, as our courses should remain focused on their respective topics.

It means that we have the freedom to create curriculum and academic programs, and choose pedagogically sound modalities and textbooks (including Open Educational Resources);

It does not mean that we can create curriculum or academic programs or choose textbooks outside of expected norms and requirements.

It means that we have the freedom to teach our topics, create our assignments, and conduct our courses as we see fit;

It does not mean that we can entirely ignore the Course Outline of Record, including addendums, (we must minimally cover what is contained within it and expectations such as regular and substantive interaction, but we are allowed to go beyond it provided we are doing so within our discipline's expectations) or implement course policies which contradict college, district, or Board or other regulatory policies.

It means that we have control over how we assess our students and assign their grades;

It does not mean that we can completely ignore the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) when assessing our students, or overly inflate grades and just “give everyone A’s”, or are immune from students contesting their grades.

It means that we have a duty to ensure our students are doing their own work and performing it to expected standards;

It does not mean that we can design our courses and assignments in ways that make it easy for students to violate academic honesty and expectations of Academic Integrity.

It means that we should continue to evolve and update our courses as educational expectations and discipline standards change;

It does not mean that we should just “phone it in” and keep our courses and assignments the exact same semester after semester.

Discipline-Specific Standards and Expectations

Disciplines are encouraged to adopt their own standards and expectations for their themselves, including any expectations for specific courses, their content, or grading. For example, are there specific books faculty should use for a particular course, should faculty only choose from the recommended books on the Course Outline of Record, or should faculty choose whichever book they want? Is there a policy on the types of assignments that faculty should be giving? Are there limits on extra credit? Creating any policies like this can help clarify expectations and resolve some potential issues regarding academic freedom.

Adjudication Procedure

Many issues involving Academic Freedom that arise are likely to be curricular matters and thus fall under the 10+1 purview of the Academic Senate. For example, a department might have a specific textbook that they have “adopted” for a course but a specific faculty member does not want to use it. Disagreements of this particular nature do not have a clear and standard resolution. When there is a disagreement regarding issues of Academic Freedom, we encourage faculty to try and find a resolution according to the following steps, making use of our Academic Senate’s Academic Integrity Workgroup for any questions. Faculty may also consult with the Union as they see fit, for example, in cases where they feel an administrator is violating their academic freedom:

Refer to any adopted and agreed upon set of standards and expectations (as created according to the above recommendations) that provides guidance in resolving the issue;
See if the disagreeing parties can come to a collegial resolution on their own;
Bring in discipline leads, departmental chairs, and/or Deans to help consult on the matter;
Bring the issue to the Academic Integrity Workgroup to help resolve the matter.

Syllabus Statement

The following is a recommended statement for inclusion in syllabi on Academic Freedom:

Academic Freedom and Responsibility

As trusted educational professionals and experts in our fields, faculty have the privilege of enjoying Academic Freedom. It means that we can teach our topics as we believe is the best and most effective way to instruct our students on our topics. This privilege also means that we are expected to uphold professional standards and maintain ourselves, our curriculum, and our classes to the expected professional standards.

Board Policy and CFE/District Agreement

The board policy and section of the union agreement governing Academic Freedom are reproduced below in their entirety:

Coast Community College District, BOARD POLICY, Chapter 4: Academic Affairs BP 4030 Academic Freedom

References:

Title 5 Section 51023;

Accreditation Standard II.A.7

Agreement between the Coast Federation of Educators American Federation of Teachers Local 1911 and Coast Community College District August 11, 2011-June, 2012

Recognizing that free search for truth and the expression of diverse opinions are essential to a democratic society, both the District and the Federation will affirm the principles of academic freedom, with the understanding that

(a) Academic Freedom is essentially the right of faculty to express or discuss in their classrooms and throughout the District challenging ideas and topics related to courses they teach and their own academic, professional expertise. The primary responsibility is to achieve the objectives of the course outline of record. This does not preclude Faculty Members from using their professional judgment in discussing other topics with their students when aimed at enhancing student learning. The expression of this right is guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of students and the advancement of their knowledge.

(b) Academic Freedom includes the right of faculty to create and to use instructional materials that may be thought-provoking or controversial and are relevant to the courses they teach to enhance student learning. These rights notwithstanding, Academic Freedom is to be practiced

within the parameters of commonly recognized standards of teaching, professional conduct, and applicable policies and laws.

(c) Faculty Members recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them. These responsibilities include the obligation to exercise critical self-discipline and sound judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge. In the conduct of their teaching and professional lives, faculty members demonstrate intellectual honesty and devotion to continual improvement of scholarly competence.

With the shared understanding of the rights and responsibilities, Academic Freedom will be promoted and protected.

A Faculty Member's exercising of his/her right of academic freedom as delineated below shall not be subject to any adverse action affecting the Faculty Member's employment status with the District:

(a) For the development and publication of instructional materials, as well as the interpretation of course content and adoption of innovative instructional methods compatible with the course outline of record and standards accepted within the academic community;

(b) For exercising freedom to examine or endorse unpopular or controversial ideas within their fields of professional expertise as appropriate to course content, discussions with students, or academic research or publication. In so doing, the Faculty Member shall attempt to be accurate, fair, objective, and show respect for diverse opinions;

(c) For using or recommending, within the parameters of (a) above, instructional materials which may challenge prevailing social attitudes, or contain unpopular or controversial ideas;

(d) For presenting all points of view in teaching and discussing controversial ideas or content in their courses and for including library materials of broad and diverse interest, information and enlightenment without prejudice in regards to the race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, social, political or religious views of the authors;

(e) For expressing in an appropriate forum the Faculty Member's viewpoint on matters of College and District policy.

(f) In collegial life, for example, for participation in the governance of their colleges, and engaging in the collegial expression of opinions in their department, college, and/or District meetings.

Political activities on college campuses shall be governed by District policies and procedures which shall be in accordance with the requirements of applicable Federal and State law. The District shall respect the Faculty Member's right in public life to exercise freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of union activity, and freedom to express expert opinions in a public forum provided it is clear that the Faculty Member is not speaking or acting on behalf of the District.

Adopted February 5, 2003
Renumbered from CCCD Policy 030-3-1.5, Fall 2010
Revised January 15, 2014

**Agreement between the Coast Federation of Educators American Federation of Teachers
Local 1911 and Coast Community College District, July 15, 2020**

ARTICLE VI. ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY.

Section 6.1. Recognizing that free search for truth and the expression of diverse opinions are essential to a democratic society, both the District and the Federation will affirm the principles of academic freedom, with the understanding that Section 6.1.a. Academic Freedom is essentially the right of faculty to express or discuss in their classrooms and throughout the District challenging ideas and topics related to courses they teach and their own academic, professional expertise. The primary responsibility is to achieve the objectives of the course outline of record. This does not preclude Faculty Members from using their professional judgment in discussing other topics with their students when aimed at enhancing student learning. The expression of this right is guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of students and the advancement of their knowledge.

Section 6.1.b. Academic Freedom includes the right of faculty to create and to use instructional materials that may be thought-provoking or controversial and are relevant to the courses they teach to enhance student learning. These rights notwithstanding, Academic Freedom is to be practiced within the parameters of commonly recognized standards of teaching, professional conduct, and applicable policies and laws.

Section 6.1.c. Faculty Members recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them. These responsibilities include the obligation to exercise critical self-discipline and sound judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge. In the conduct of their teaching and professional lives, faculty members demonstrate intellectual honesty and devotion to continual improvement of scholarly competence.

With the shared understanding of the rights and responsibilities, Academic Freedom will be promoted and protected.

Section 6.2. A Faculty Member's exercising of his/her right of academic freedom as delineated in this Section shall not be subject to any adverse action affecting the Faculty Member's employment status with the District:

Section 6.2.a. For the development and publication of instructional materials, as well as the interpretation of course content and adoption of innovative instructional methods compatible with the course outline of record and standards accepted within the academic community;

Section 6.2.b. For exercising freedom to examine or endorse unpopular or controversial ideas within their fields of professional expertise as appropriate to course content, discussions with students, or academic research or publication. In so doing, the Faculty Member shall attempt to be accurate, fair, objective, and show respect for diverse opinions;

Section 6.2.c. For using or recommending, within the parameters of a. above, instructional materials which may challenge prevailing social attitudes, or contain unpopular or controversial ideas;

Section 6.2.d. For presenting all points of view in teaching and discussing controversial ideas or content in their courses and for including library materials of broad and diverse interest, information and enlightenment without prejudice in regards to the race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, social, political or religious views of the authors;

Section 6.2.e. For expressing in an appropriate forum, the Faculty Member's viewpoint on matters of College and District policy;

Section 6.2.f. In collegial life, for example, for participation in the governance of their colleges, and engaging in the collegial expression of opinions in their department, College, and/or District meetings.

Section 6.3. Political activities on College campuses shall be governed by District policies and procedures which shall be in accordance with the requirements of applicable Federal and State law.

Section 6.4. The District shall respect the Faculty Member's right in public life to exercise freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of union activity, and freedom to express expert opinions in a public forum provided it is clear that the Faculty Member is not speaking or acting on behalf of the District.