ACADEMIC FREEDOM

A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

1. Freedom of speech is a right granted to all citizens by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution; it is vital to American standards of fairness and intelligent debate, and, therefore, it extends to the classroom environment for teachers and students.

2. A mature, democratic society functions best when its citizens are permitted and able to exercise their right to discuss, debate, disagree, challenge, and engage in dialogue on all topics relating to the welfare of individuals and the larger community.

3. An institution of higher education in such a society is expected to enable its faculty, students and staff to comprehend and value the freedoms and responsibilities inherent in its national culture.

4. Only an academic environment that promotes an open and free exchange of ideas can properly develop the cognitive skills of critical inquiry which promote individual success and societal progress.

5. The college, as an institution of higher education, has an obligation to the community to promote the thoughtful introduction of a full gamut of ideas for discussion. This is facilitated by:
   a. Establishing a policy promoting the principle of academic freedom and encouraging faculty and students to exercise this practice by developing and accepting opportunities for critical thinking and personal growth
   b. Ensuring that the policy of academic freedom successfully guarantees mutual respect by all participants in the educational environment, including the protection from the threat of political or personal attack. Such guarantees include the full scope of professional faculty obligations relative to assigning textbooks, presenting student learning activities, evaluating student performance or achievement and participating in the academic life of the community.

B. ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND THE FACULTY

1. Academic freedom in the course of instruction means that faculty members teaching in the District have the prerogative to present and explore all issues relevant to their disciplines which contribute to the education of students regarding the substance of each course's content and the student learning outcomes.

2. Quality teaching is understood to involve intellectual honesty and academic integrity in the presentation of subjects assigned. Such professional decorum requires the presentation of differing perspectives and interpretations with balanced intellectual rigor.

3. Faculty members are expected to maintain their own scholastic currency in their academic disciplines, and their capabilities as instructors within those disciplines.

4. It is recognized by the District and faculty members that the faculty members are also private citizens, with all attendant rights and responsibilities as private citizens.

a. However, when a member of the faculty speaks or acts in his or her capacity as a private citizen, it needs to be made clear to the audience that the faculty member is speaking as a private citizen.

b. It should be clear that any positions taken by faculty members speaking as private citizens are not to be considered as official District policy or positions.

c. This provision is not intended to limit the right of a faculty member to disagree publicly or privately with District policy, and to participate in peaceful debate on any subject of interest to academic community or the larger issues of society.

D. DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUPPORT

1. The District is committed to the full support of the principle of academic freedom within all its activities.

2. The District supports the freedom of all faculty to inquire, to teach controversial content, to model and encourage critical thinking, and to present all viewpoints within each discipline.

3. The District supports the freedom of all students to inquire, to have access to the full range of information available, to explore difficult and controversial material, to develop and practice critical thinking skills, and to operate in a classroom climate free of intimidation and conducive to the free exchange of ideas is fully encouraged and expected.

4. Under the provisions of the California Education Code, the faculty have the right and the professional responsibility to assign grades. The District recognizes its obligation to ensure that faculty members will be allowed to exercise their responsibilities free from political influence, intimidation, or threat of lawsuit.