



## 12.01.99.D1 Academic Freedom and Responsibility

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### Rule Summary

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Institutions of higher education exist for the common good. The common good depends upon an uninhibited search for truth and its open expression. Hence, it is essential that each faculty member be free to pursue scholarly inquiry, and to voice and publish individual conclusions concerning the significance of evidence that the faculty member considers relevant. Each faculty member must be free from the corrosive fear that others, inside or outside the academic community, because their vision may differ, may threaten the faculty member's professional career or the material benefits accruing from it. Consistent with The Texas A&M University System Policy Statement *12.01, Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Tenure* this rule details the essential components of academic freedom and documents the responsibilities and obligations of faculty.

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### Rule

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#### 1. GENERAL

Texas A&M University-Central Texas (A&M-Central Texas) openly supports diverse beliefs and the free exchange of ideas. A&M-Central Texas vigorously protects freedom of inquiry and expression and expects civility and mutual respect to be practiced in all deliberations. The University provides two standard administrative procedures for addressing possible infringements of academic freedom or responsibility. University Procedure 32.01.01.D0.01 *Complaint and Appeal Procedures for Faculty Members* is intended to provide a fair, internal process for resolving disputes that arise between faculty members and between faculty and their administrative supervisors. University Procedure 12.02.99.D0.01, *Institutional Procedures for Implementing Tenure* outlines the due process for faculty that have been dismissed from a tenured position.

#### ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

- 1.1 Each faculty member is entitled to full freedom in the classroom in discussing the subject being taught. Within the bounds of academic ethics and responsibilities (see Section 3), faculty members also have full freedom to express disagreement with other members of the university community. Although faculty members observe the rules and procedures of the institution, they maintain the right to criticize and seek revision to these rules and procedures. Faculty members also are citizens of the nation, state, and community; therefore, when speaking, writing, or acting outside the classroom, they must be free from

institutional censorship or discipline. On such occasions faculty members should clearly state that they are not speaking on behalf of A&M-Central Texas.

- 1.1.1 Faculty are entitled to academic freedom in scholarship and creative activity and in the publication or performance of the results. (American Association of University Professors, 1990.)
- 1.1.2 Faculty are entitled to academic freedom when teaching face-to-face, online, or any combination thereof. Specifically, faculty are free to discuss material that is relevant to their subject matter. Faculty should be careful not to introduce into their teaching matters which have no relation to the subject. (American Association of University Professors, 1990.) Academic freedom does not relieve faculty of approved curriculum requirements and processes.
- 1.1.3 Faculty are free to exercise their constitutional rights as citizens without institutional censorship or discipline. As scholars and educational officers, faculty should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. At all times faculty must strive to be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinions of others, and make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution when they are speaking or acting as private persons. (American Association of University Professors, 1990.)

## 2. ACADEMIC ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The scope of academic freedom is broad, but it is not unlimited. Academic freedom does not protect refusing reasonable requests from a supervisor, chronically ineffective teaching or unprofessional conduct. False statements made with knowledge of their falsity or in reckless disregard of the truth are not entitled to constitutional protection, and public statements may be so without foundation as to call into question the fitness of the faculty member to perform his or her professional duties.

### 2.1 As such, faculty:

- 2.1.1 should foster scholarly values in students, including academic honesty, the free pursuit of learning, and the exercise of academic freedom;
- 2.1.2 should act professionally in the classroom and in other academic relationships with students. Faculty members should exercise critical self-discipline and judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge;
- 2.1.3 should encourage students to engage in free discussion and inquiry, and should support intellectual pluralism in the spirit of openness, tolerance, and inquiry;
- 2.1.4 should maintain respect for students and evaluate them on the merit of their academic performance. Faculty should be available at reasonable intervals to students for consultation on course work;
- 2.1.5 shall not engage in any exploitation, harassment, or illegal discriminatory treatment of students.

### 2.2 Faculty have ethical obligations and responsibilities to other members of the university community. Faculty shall:

- 2.2.1 neither harass nor exploit any member of the university community;

- 2.2.2 respect and defend the free inquiry of associates. In the exchange of criticism and ideas, faculty members show due respect for the opinions of others;
  - 2.2.3 acknowledge the academic contributions of others, strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues, and accept their share of faculty responsibilities for contributing to the governance of the institution.
- 2.3 Faculty members have ethical obligations and responsibilities to A&M-Central Texas as an institution.
- 2.3.1 A faculty member's comments regarding matters of public concern are protected even though they may be highly critical in tone or content, or even erroneous. The constitutionally protected rights of faculty members, as citizens, to freedom of expression on matters of public concern must be balanced with the interest of the state, as an employer, in promoting the efficiency of the educational services it performs through its employees. Faculty members, like all citizens, are liable for all actions that are not constitutionally protected.
  - 2.3.2 Faculty members should recognize that their primary responsibilities are to the institution as they determine the amount (if any) and character of work done outside of the institution. Such outside work shall be consistent with A&M-Central Texas rules and procedures. Although faculty members may follow additional interests, these must never compromise their freedom and willingness to draw intellectually honest conclusions.
  - 2.3.3 When considering the interruption or termination of their service, faculty members should take into account the effect of their decision upon the institution and give due notice of their intentions.
  - 2.3.4 Faculty members have ethical obligations and responsibilities to their profession and deriving from their membership in the professorate. The fundamental responsibilities of a faculty member as a teacher and scholar include maintenance of competence in their area of specialization and exhibition of such professional competence in the classroom, studio, or laboratory and in the public arena by such activities as discussions, lectures, consulting, performances, exhibitions, publications, or participation in professional organizations and meetings.
  - 2.3.5 Faculty members have ethical obligations and responsibilities to the public. The demonstration of professional integrity by a faculty member includes recognition that the society at large will judge the profession as well as the institution by his or her statements and behavior. Therefore, academic research and scholarship must be carried out under the highest standards of honesty and integrity. The faculty member should strive to be accurate, to exercise appropriate restraint, to be willing to listen to and show respect to members of the society at large expressing different opinions, and to avoid creating the impression that the faculty member speaks or acts for the college or the University when speaking or acting as a private person.

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## Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

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System Policy [\*12.01, Academic Freedom, Responsibility, and Tenure\*](#)

University Procedure [\*12.02.99.D0.01 Institutional Procedures for Implementing Tenure\*](#)

University Procedure [\*32.01.01.D0.01 Complaint and Appeal Procedures for Faculty Members\*](#)

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## References

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American Association of University Professors (1990). 1940 statement of principles on academic freedom and tenure. Retrieved November 4, 2016 from <http://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure>

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## Contact Office

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