

**Position Statement on Academic Freedom  
Faculty Council of Community Colleges  
October 2014**

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), in the opening of their joint 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, state that colleges and universities exist for the common good, and that the common good “depends upon the free search for truth and its free expression.” Academic freedom is “essential to these purposes[.]”

Academic Freedom is a right of full-time and part-time faculty and staff that protects the following activities:

- providing constructive criticism on academic and institutional policies and procedures and the ability to recommend such policies and procedures to their respective institution of higher learning;
- teaching their classes using instructional resources (including but not limited to social media, videos, group discussion, debate, subject matter, etc.) and pedagogies that promote critical thinking and investigation into their respective disciplines;
- conducting academic research; and
- maintaining their authority to uphold academic standards and assign appropriate grades.

Important reasons for community college faculty and staff to include a statement involving Academic Freedom in their governance by-laws, employment contracts, and professional rights and responsibilities handbooks include the following:

- Faculty and staff are often required to serve on boards or committees of their colleges and in such capacity, they should be able to offer their opinions and recommendations about academic and institutional issues without fear of disciplinary action or censorship;
- Curriculum issues, program development, course development, and instruction are all areas where faculty are the experts and therefore need the ability to teach in ways that inspire critical thinking in their fields. Faculty have long been seen as the stewards of curriculum development, and faculty’s involvement in communicating their field to students and the community is of prime importance.
- Since Academic Freedom applies to community college faculty who engage in research and creative expression, a clearly crafted statement on Academic Freedom serves both to protect and to educate faculty about their rights.
- Each community college is unique in its governance structure, employment contracts and means of communicating their expectations of faculty and staff; therefore, each campus is encouraged to make sure that academic freedom is defined and protected so that there is never a miscommunication of what academic freedom is or is not.