

Faculty Council of Community Colleges Statement Supporting Campus Inclusivity and Civil Discourse

Because the 2016 national election has stirred intense reactions among the diverse populations within our college communities, as well as within the community at large, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges feels compelled to address the potential impact on the learning and work environment of our colleges and on the rights of our students, faculty and college personnel.

Whereas the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America provides for freedom of speech, freedom of the press, free exercise of religion, and the right to peaceably assemble, higher education has a long tradition of upholding “the free search for truth and its free expression” as fundamental to the contributions of colleges and universities “for the common good” of American society, as expressed in the AAUP and ACU 1940 Joint Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom.

Furthermore, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in its present Standard 2 states, “An accredited institution...demonstrates...a commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, [and] freedom of expression”; and notes, “The effective institution addresses diversity of opinion with openness and balance.” In their November 16, 2016 Memorandum to Presidents throughout the State University of New York system, SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher and Board of Trustees Chairman H. Carl McCall reaffirmed “SUNY’s commitments to free speech and peaceful demonstration remain strong,” noting as well that “our commitment to inclusion is what defines us.”* In fact, SUNY community colleges serve a unique mission aimed at access, affordability and opportunity for all, the earmarks that have earned community colleges nationwide recognition as “democracy’s colleges.”

Necessary to maintaining and cultivating a healthy and productive learning environment and the exercise of the aforementioned freedoms is also the freedom from fear and intimidation, a basic human right. In light of its commitment to the principles of the community college mission, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges stands firmly opposed to actions aimed at cultivating an atmosphere of incivility, intimidation, exclusion, hatred, dehumanization or violence counterproductive to the educational mission of the community colleges or to the welfare of the people and communities which they serve.

Therefore, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges calls for the responsible and open exercise of academic and constitutional freedoms in support of civil discourse and inclusivity, with respect for the differing opinions, perspectives, identities and cultures of our diverse communities and the safety of their members. Furthermore, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges encourages open and balanced dialog and inquiry aimed at increasing knowledge, sharing wisdom, advancing a respectful understanding of the diversity of the human experience, and cultivating a sense of inclusivity and shared humanity. The Faculty Council of Community Colleges stands firmly in support of the safety and the respectful treatment of all our students who seek to learn and of the faculty and personnel who work within our community colleges in the fulfillment of our educational mission and civic responsibilities.

**Note regarding MTP taken from proposed resolution of Grant Campus of Suffolk Community College*