



Board Policy
Chapter 4 – Academic Affairs

BP 4030 ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Academic freedom is essential not only to examine controversial issues in an objective manner in the classroom, but also to insure access to information sources required for study of such issues. The intellectual search for transmission of knowledge should go forward in an atmosphere free from fear of reprisal, while providing opportunities for critical thinking and understanding of conflicting viewpoints. In order that special interests or conflicting public opinion not impede the educational process, instructors and students must be free to investigate, to form conclusions, and to express judgments and opinions. Academic freedom also includes the right to constructively criticize college policies without fear of retribution.

Academic freedom carries with it several responsibilities. Faculty members must strive for factual accuracy and show restraint in dealing with topics outside their area of expertise. While showing respect for the opinions of others, the instructor should, after impartial examination of the evidence, present the conclusions to which the evidence points. Selective omission of available data would not be in keeping with academic responsibility. Promotion of a partisan point of view to a captive audience would be equally unsuitable.

Members of the faculty, administration, college staff and student body should feel free to speak in public forums or write "Letters to the Editor" and write publicly without institutional censorship, as long as they indicate they are not acting as institutional spokespersons. The college has a responsibility to society to defend and maintain academic freedom to insure that educational goals can be achieved and that all fields of knowledge can be studied, discussed, and interpreted in an objective and scholarly manner.

References:

- Title 5, Section 51023;*
- ACCJC Accreditation Eligibility Requirement 13 and 20;*
- ACCJC Accreditation Standard 4.1*

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Revised: June 4, 2024 (references only)

(Replaces former SMC BP 5210)