

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

BP 4030

Board Adopted: 1-10-68; 4-19-78; 1-10-79; 3-15-06; 3-11-15; 5-8-19

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I. Statement of Policy

In the interest of providing an academic environment in which Rio Hondo College faculty, administration, staff, students and Board of Trustees can function in an effective manner, and to encourage robust, thought-provoking, and intense discussion and inquiry the following academic freedom premise and guidelines shall prevail.

II. Philosophy

The maintenance of freedom of speech, publication, religion, and assembly (each of which is a component of intellectual freedom) is the breath of life in a democratic society. The need is greatest in fields and institutions of higher learning, where the use of reason and the cultivation of the highest forms of human expression are the basic methods for maintaining those freedoms. Society has come to rely upon colleges and universities as a principal means of acquiring new knowledge and new techniques, of conveying the fruits of past and present learning to the community, and of transmitting these results to generations to come. Without freedom to explore, to criticize existing institutions, to exchange ideas, and to advocate solutions to human problems, faculty members, staff and students cannot perform their work, cannot maintain their self-respect. Society suffers correspondingly. The liberty that is needed requires a freedom of thought and expression within colleges and universities, freedom to carry the results of honest inquiry to the outside, and a freedom to influence human affairs in the same manner as other informed persons do. Nor is the value of freedom lessened because error at times arises from its exercise. Learning, intellectual development, and social and scientific progress takes place on a trial-and-error basis, and even the unsound cause or hypothesis may call forth the truth that displaces it.

III. Guidelines

In pursuit of the above, the Board, the faculty, staff, administrators, and students at Rio Hondo College recognize the following rights and responsibilities:

- A. Campus members must be free from pressures or demands that restrict their intellectual search for and transmittal of knowledge.
- B. Membership in the academic community imposes on students, faculty members, administrators, staff, and the Board an obligation to respect the dignity of others, to acknowledge their right, without institutional censorship or disciplinary action, to express differing inquiry and instruction, and free expression.
- C. Faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subjects that may include related controversial issues. Faculty should help the students develop techniques for considering controversial questions—techniques that they will habitually use in later life. The handling of a

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controversial question in a college should be free from assumption that there is one correct answer to be taught authoritatively to the student.

- D. The faculty will be guided in its teaching by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of the advancement of knowledge and the special responsibilities that the pursuit of this carries. The primary responsibility faculty members have to their discipline is to seek and state the truth as they understand it, and to this end they will devote their energies.
- E. As teachers, faculty members will encourage in their students the free pursuit of learning and will hold them to a high scholarly standard. Every effort will be made to foster honest academic conduct in students and to assure them that their evaluation reflects true achievement. Faculty members will avoid exploiting the students for private advantage and will protect the students' academic freedom.
- F. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students are members of a free American society and are members of a scholarly community and an educational institution. When they speak or write in these capacities, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline. As such, campus members may exercise their constitutionally protected freedom of speech and participate in public debate, both within their area of expertise and beyond, to comment on any matter of social, political, economic, cultural, or other interest. Campus members should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their statements. Hence, campus members should at all times attempt to be accurate, should exercise judiciousness, show respect for the opinions of others, and should indicate when they are not speaking for the College.
- G. Furthermore, campus members are entitled to express viewpoints on any matter of institutional policy or action whether or not that person acts as a member of college governance.
- H. The Board acknowledges its responsibility to embrace, foster, promote, and protect academic freedom. Having done so, the Board plans to protect campus members from any partisan pressures that may develop.
- I. Faculty are experts in course content and pedagogy, who are free to evaluate the performance of their students, including assigning grades, without fear of reprisal based on any success metric.

IV. Sources/References

Title 5, Section 51023;

ACCJC Accreditation Eligibility Requirement 20 and ACCJC Standard I.C.7 (formerly II.A.7)

American Association of University Professors' 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure