



ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Policy Number: CU-AA-61

GENERAL

Concord University embraces the principle of academic freedom as inherent to intellectual inquiry. It further recognizes that freedom of expression is not absolute and that with freedom comes responsibility.

PURPOSE

This policy has been enacted to provide clarification on academic freedom, principles of free expression, and related faculty responsibilities at Concord University, while providing a balance between individual academic freedoms and the need to protect civility, safety, and the rights of others.

SCOPE

This policy is applicable to: Faculty, both tenured and non-tenured, regardless of rank.

POLICY

It is the policy of Concord University to provide opportunity for members of the academic community to freely study, discuss, investigate, teach, conduct research, and publish, depending upon their particular role at the institution and to hold the academic community accountable for the exercising such freedom responsibly.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Concord University is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. All Concord University faculty members shall be entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results of such research, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties, which may include designated instruction, research, creative activities, university and community service, and other professional duties.

Further, each faculty member is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing the subject taught, including examining conflicting perspectives on controversial issues germane to the subject.

When faculty members speak or write as citizens outside the institution, they shall be free from institutional censorship or discipline, providing the member declares to be speaking as a citizen and not on behalf, nor as a representative, of the university.

Principles of Free Speech

Consistent with a number of progressive universities, Concord University has set forth principles of free speech adapted from those developed and adopted by the University of Chicago. By adopting these principles, Concord University is taking a strong stand in favor of freedom of expression.

Concord University is committed to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the

University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose.

Conflicts of ideas and opinions will occur but the University will not attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable or even deeply offensive. Although Concord greatly values civility, and although all members of the Concord community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some, most, or even all members of our University community.

The freedom to discuss and debate the merits of competing ideas does not, of course, mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish, and whenever they wish. Concord may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the University.

As a corollary to Concord's commitment to protect and promote free speech, members of the University community must also act in conformity with the principles of free speech. Although members of the University are free to criticize and contest the views expressed on campus, and to criticize and contest speakers who are invited to express their views on campus, they may not attempt to prevent or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe.

Members of the faculty are expected to act, therefore, within the framework of good citizenship and consistent with the values, standards, and expectations of the university.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

A faculty member, together with all other members of the academic community, has the responsibility for protecting, defending, and promoting individual academic freedom for all members of the University community.

The faculty member, as a teacher, is responsible for striving to speak with accuracy and with respect for the similar rights and responsibilities of others.

The exercise of academic freedom and/or free speech shall not in and of itself be grounds for disciplinary action or dismissal. Members of the academic community, however, are expected to avoid speaking with disrespect and/or contempt either to or about an individual and from making false and / or defamatory claims regarding people or the institution.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

It is the responsibility of: the Provost, or designee(s), to ensure academic freedom and freedom of expression and accountability for adherence to related professional responsibilities consistent with this policy.

AUTHORITY FOR INTERPRETATION

The final authority for interpretation of this policy rests with the President and Provost.

AMENDMENTS

This Policy may be amended to change names, links to information, and contact information without resorting to the rulemaking process.

Federal and State laws, rules and regulations change. Any portion of this policy and process document may be modified in practice to ensure the due process rights of the individuals involved are provided and to conform with any current Federal and State law, rules and regulations. Subject to the institution's rulemaking policy, the institution will change this policy to conform to the most current laws and regulations within a reasonable time of discovering the change.

REFERENCE / AUTHORITY

WV Code 18B-8-7 (Authority of Governing Boards relating to faculty)

1940 Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom by AAUP and AACU

Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression, University of Chicago, January 2015

*Preempts HEPC Series 9, Section 2 (Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility), and any conflicting Concord University Policy and/or Concord University Faculty Handbook section(s).

APPROVAL

Intent to Plan/ Revise Approved by the Board of Governors: April 20, 2021

Approved by the Board of Governors: June 15, 2021

Effective Date: June 15, 2021