

Procedure V.5003.A.a, Academic Freedom

Associated Policy

Policy V.5003.A, Academic Freedom

Procedures

Faculty will follow procedural guidelines intended to guide the exercise of academic freedom at San Jacinto College. Said responsibilities include, without limitation, the following:

- The fundamental responsibilities of faculty, as teachers and scholars, include maintenance of competence in their fields of specialization and the exhibition of such professional competence in the classroom, studio or laboratory, and in the public arena by such activities as discussions, lectures, consulting, publications, or participation in professional organizations and meetings.
- The exercise of professional integrity by faculty includes recognition that the public will judge their profession and institution by their statements: verbal or written, including social media commentary. Therefore, faculty will strive to be accurate, to exercise appropriate restraint, to be willing to listen to and show respect for others expressing different opinions, and to avoid creating the impression that they speak or act for the College when speaking or acting as a private person.

The constitutionally protected right of faculty must be balanced with the interest of the State, as an employer, in promoting the efficiency of the educational services it performs through its employees. Faculty's comments are protected even though they may be highly critical in tone or content, or erroneous, but such statements are not protected free speech if faculty either substantially impede performance of daily duties or materially and substantially interfere with the regular operation of the institution, or if they are part of a continuing pattern of expression of such nature as to destroy the harmony and morale of a division, department, or College. False statements made with the knowledge of that falsity or in reckless disregard of the truth are not entitled to constitutional protection, and public statements may be so without foundation as to call into question the fitness of a faculty member to perform professional duties.

Faculty will be judicious in the use of controversial material in the classroom and will introduce such material only as it has clear relationship with the subject field.

Faculty will be professional in their conduct in the classroom and in their relationship with students. Faculty will maintain respect for students and for students as learners. Faculty will make themselves appropriately available to students for consultation on course work.

Faculty will be prepared to identify any potentially controversial items they may want to include in their classroom discussions or assignments and using their professional judgement, ensure that the topic is pertinent to the classroom subject.

Faculty will weigh the benefits and potential risks involved in the discussion of controversial topics or assignments. If a viable option to address a learning outcome or achieve the mastery of a subject without including the controversial topic or assignment exists, faculty members will

consider pursuing the less controversial option. While San Jacinto College does not want to discourage what is controversial, these procedures are meant to support the careful use of controversy within the context of the subject being taught.

While it is not always possible to identify which expressions of controversial ideas or assignments will impose risks, faculty will use their best efforts to attempt to identify any potential risks associated with including controversial topics in the classroom and have open communication in advance with their leaders as early as possible to help mitigate such risks.

If faculty feel their rights to academic freedom have been violated, they will follow the Policy IV-I, Policy on Employee Concerns and Grievances.

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Associated Policy	Policy V.5003.A, Academic Freedom
Primary Owner of Policy Associated with the Procedure	Deputy Chancellor & President
Secondary Owner of Policy Associated with the Procedure	Provosts
