

NUMBER: STAF 6.28
SECTION: Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support
SUBJECT: Academic Freedom
DATE: June 1, 1992
REVISED: November 10, 2016
Policy for: Columbia Campus
Procedure for: Columbia Campus
Authorized by: Vice President for Student Affairs
Issued by: Housing (Approved by the Board of Trustees)

I. Policy

The statement of student rights and responsibilities was passed by the Student Senate, the Faculty Senate, and approved by the Board of Trustees of the University.

A. GENERAL UNDERSTANDINGS

1. The statement in no way intends to abrogate the legal powers invested in the Board of Trustees under American corporate law and the laws of the State of South Carolina.
2. The statement is recognized as a statement of principles only and that the interpretation of the statement, its principles, and procedures is a continuing joint process.
3. The implementation of the joint statement must be in harmony with our stated educational purposes and must be worked out in a number of subsidiary implementing documents.
4. The statement is clearly understood as not giving complete autonomy to any sector of the academic community but promotes a community approach to those problems which are of proper concern to the university as a whole.

B. PREAMBLE

Academic institutions exist for the transmission of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the development of students, and the general well-being of society. Free inquiry and free expression are indispensable to the attainment of these goals. As members of the academic community, students should be encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment

and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Institutional procedures for achieving these purposes may vary from campus to campus, but the minimal standards of academic freedom of students outlined below are essential to any community of scholars.

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facts of academic freedom. The freedom to learn depends upon appropriate opportunities and conditions in the classroom, on the campus, and in the larger community. Students should exercise their freedom with responsibility.

The responsibility to secure and to respect general conditions conducive to the freedom to learn is shared by all members of the academic community.

The university has a duty to develop policies and procedures that provide and safeguard this freedom. Such policies and procedures should be developed within the framework of general standards with the broadest possible participation of the members of the academic community. The purpose of this statement is to enumerate the essential provisions for student freedom to learn.

C. FREEDOM OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The admissions policies of the university are a matter of institutional choice provided that the university makes clear the characteristics and expectations of the students that it considers relevant to success in the institutional program. Under no circumstances should a student be barred from admission on the basis of race, creed, sex, handicap, religion, ancestry, national origin, genetics, sexual orientation or veteran status. Thus, within the limits of its facilities, the university should be open to all students who are qualified according to its admission standards.

D. IN THE CLASSROOM

The professor in the classroom and in conference should encourage free discussion, inquiry, and expression. Student performance should be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards.

E. PROTECTION OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Students should be free to take reasoned exceptions to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.

F. PROTECTION AGAINST IMPROPER ACADEMIC EVALUATION

Students should have protection through orderly procedures against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation. At the same time, they are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled.

G. PROTECTION AGAINST IMPROPER DISCLOSURE

Information about student views, beliefs, and political associations which professors acquire in the course of their work as instructors, advisors, and counselors should be considered confidential. Protection against improper disclosure is a serious professional obligation. Judgments of ability and character may be provided under appropriate circumstances, normally with the knowledge and consent of the student.

II. Reason for Revision

Policy organization, content, and accuracy reviewed; no substantive revisions required.