

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE

BERKELEY • DAVIS • IRVINE • LOS ANGELES • MERCED • RIVERSIDE • SAN DIEGO • SAN FRANCISCO



SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

Michael T. Brown
Telephone: (510) 987-0711
Fax: (510) 763-0309
Email: Michael.Brown@ucop.edu

Chair of the Assembly and the Academic Council
Faculty Representative to the Board of Regents
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200

March 27, 2008

PRESIDENT ROBERT C. DYNES

Re: Proposed Student Freedom of Scholarly Inquiry Principles

Dear Bob:

At its January 30, 2008 meeting, the Assembly of the Academic Senate endorsed the proposed *Student Freedom of Scholarly Inquiry Principles*, which are provided below for your consideration and adoption by the University. The Assembly also asks that these '*Principles*' appear as a footnote in APM 010.

Preamble to Student Freedom of Scholarly Inquiry Principles Approved by the Assembly of the Academic Senate on January 30, 2008

The University of California seeks to provide and sustain an environment conducive to sharing, extending, and critically examining knowledge and values, and furthering the search for wisdom. Effective performance of these central functions requires that students be free within their respective level in the educational process to pursue knowledge in accord with appropriate standards of scholarly inquiry.

But the nature of student freedom of scholarly inquiry has not been well articulated in the University. This lack of clarity was brought to the attention of the University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF) in 2003 as a result of student awareness of the recent revisions to the University's policy on academic freedom (APM 010). UCAF agreed to examine the issue, and a joint Academic Senate-Student Affairs systemwide work group was established to this end. The workgroup consisted of faculty from UCAF, Academic Senate faculty leaders, student regents, student representatives from campuses, divisional campus student affairs representatives, and staff from the Office of the President.

In the workgroup's deliberations, it became clear that the issue was more complex than first thought. This was primarily due to articulating sound principles that account for differences in student roles based on whether they are undergraduate students, graduate students, or postdoctoral fellows. Within this range of roles, the concept of "student" has varied operational meanings associated with intellectual maturity and development, as well as with academic responsibilities such as graduate student teaching and participation as a researcher-colleague.

The most salient guiding principle that emerged from our deliberations is that academic freedom is conferred in the University of California by virtue of faculty membership. As such, student freedom of scholarly inquiry is ultimately derived from, and protected by, faculty academic freedom. Student freedom of scholarly inquiry should also not be construed as adversarial to the faculty from which it derives. The academic freedom of the faculty in the classroom is not absolute, as outlined in the Faculty Code of Conduct in situations where controversial opinions are not germane to the subject of the course.

These Principles are intended as an aspirational statement to guide members of the University community toward the goal of preserving an environment conducive to promoting the highest standards of teaching and scholarship.

Student Freedom of Scholarly Inquiry Principles

The University seeks to foster in its students a mature independence of mind, and this purpose cannot be achieved unless students are free to express a wide range of viewpoints in accord with the standards of scholarly inquiry for the competence of student work at each level of the educational process. The substance and nature of these standards properly lie within the expertise and authority of the faculty as a body.¹ As such, it is primarily the responsibility of the faculty as set forth in the Faculty Code of Conduct to insure that student freedom of scholarly inquiry is fostered and preserved in the University.²

While there is substantial variation in students' competence to engage in scholarly inquiry based on their level in the educational process, the faculty has the major responsibility to establish conditions that protect and encourage all students in their learning, teaching, and research activities, and such conditions should not place an unrealistic burden on students. Such conditions include, for example: free inquiry and exchange of ideas; the right to critically examine, present, and discuss controversial material relevant to a course of instruction; enjoyment of constitutionally protected freedom of expression; and the right to be judged by faculty in accordance with fair procedures solely on the basis of the student's academic performance and conduct.

¹ See *Academic Freedom*, [University of California Academic Personnel Manual 010](#).

² See *The Faculty Code of Conduct*, [University of California Academic Personnel Manual 015](#).

For students to develop a mature independence of mind, they must be free in the classroom to express a wide range of viewpoints in accord with standards of scholarly inquiry and relevance to the topic at hand. No student can abridge the rights of other students when exercising their right to differ. Students should be free to take civil and reasoned exception 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.³ The faculty has authority for all aspects of the course, including content, structure, relevance of alternative points of view, and evaluations. All decisions affecting a student's academic standing, including assignment of grades, should be based upon academic considerations administered fairly and equitably under policies established by the Academic Senate.⁴ In professional curricula, such decisions may include consideration of performance according to accepted professional standards.⁵

Students may also serve as instructors under supervision of the faculty. The faculty retains authority over all aspects of the course, including, content, structure, evaluations, and delegation of authority for the course, and must base the guidance of student instructors on accepted scholarly and professional standards of competence in teaching. However, such student instructors share with faculty the freedom and responsibility to present concepts, lead discussion in class, and to insure the appropriate and civil treatment of other members of the academic community.

Faculty guidance and supervision of student research is desirable and appropriate. Students' freedom of inquiry while conducting research may not be abridged by decisions contrary to accepted conduct⁶ and scholarly and professional standards, except under certain circumstances.⁷ Students are entitled to the protection of their intellectual rights, including recognition of their participation in supervised research and their research with faculty, consistent with generally accepted standards of attribution and acknowledgement in collaborative settings.

³ An example of this responsibility from the American Association of University Professors statement on the Academic Bill of Rights follows: If a professor of constitutional law reads the examination of a student who contends that terrorist violence should be protected by the First Amendment because of its symbolic message, the determination of whether the examination should receive a high or low grade must be made by reference to the scholarly standards of the law. The application of these standards properly distinguishes indoctrination from competent pedagogy. Similarly, if a professor of American literature reads the examination of a student that proposes a singular interpretation of *Moby Dick*, the determination of whether the examination should receive a high or low grade must be made by reference to the scholarly standards of literary criticism. The student has no "right" to be rewarded for an opinion of *Moby Dick* that is independent of these scholarly standards. If students possessed such rights, all knowledge would be reduced to opinion, and education would be rendered superfluous.

(<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/About/committees/committee+repts/CommA/academicbillof+rights.htm>)

⁴ See APM 015.

⁵ See University of California 170.00 Policy on University Obligations and Student Rights, section 171.09.

(<http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/coordrev/ucpolicies/aos/uc170.html>)

⁶ See University of California Presidential Policy on Student Conduct and Discipline, Section 100.00.

⁷ Graduate thesis research must be conducted under the supervision of a specified faculty advisor. If the student cannot identify a faculty advisor in the student's program who agrees to supervise the research, then the student may not conduct his or her research as part of the thesis or dissertation. Graduate student research also may not be supported by intramural or extramural resources when it does not conform to the specific faculty member's research program under which the award was made.

These protections are in addition to, and distinct from, the full protections of the Constitution of the United States and of the Constitution of the State of California guaranteeing freedom of speech.

We request that the proposed *Student Freedom of Scholarly Inquiry Principles* be adopted by the University henceforth as policy. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael", written in a cursive style.

Michael T. Brown, Chair
Academic Council

Copy: Assembly
Executive Director Bertero-Barceló