

AP 4030 - Academic Freedom

As stated in Board Policy 4030, the Butte-Glenn Community College District is committed to preserving academic freedom, which includes protection for the teacher to teach and for the student to learn. Academic freedom protections apply to all work environments regardless of modality.

Academic freedom recognizes that freedom to teach and freedom to learn imply both rights and responsibilities.

Faculty Academic Freedom Rights and Responsibilities

Academic freedom encompasses the right of instructional faculty to teach, conduct research and engage in intramural speech (e.g. shared governance), without interference or censorship. Non-instructional faculty (e.g. librarians, counselors and academic professionals) are protected by academic freedom when their duties encompass instructional, informational or research matters and when engaging in intramural speech. The First Amendment also protects faculty members' extramural speech (e.g. public forums), when they are speaking or writing as private citizens on public matters. Academic freedom grants to faculty the following rights:

1. To determine the course content, instructional materials, pedagogical methods and student assessment methods for the courses taught, consistent with professional training and the course outline of record;
2. To discuss the subject matter of the course as appropriate, consistent with professional training and the course outline of record, even when the subject is controversial;
3. To develop assignments and instructional activities appropriate to the subject, consistent with professional training and the course outline of record;
4. To evaluate students' work based on the academic merit of their performance;
5. To demonstrate, teach and require critical thinking, including sound reasoning, evidence-based argumentation and intellectual honesty;
6. To express differences of opinion with and among students, faculty, staff, and administration on academic matters, even when the subject is controversial or uncomfortable;
7. To maintain a classroom environment in which students are free to express relevant ideas and viewpoints as long as doing so does not constitute discrimination, harassment, bullying or other misconduct toward a fellow student or a faculty member;
8. To choose research topics and methods of investigation and publish their work;

9. To speak as private citizens on matters of public concern, which includes any matter of political, social, or other concern to the community;
10. To engage with colleagues in shared governance, including approving curriculum;
11. To determine whether and how instructional and other technology are incorporated into their teaching and assessment, ensuring alignment with the course outline of record.
12. For non-instructional faculty, to engage in academic work that involves educational, informational, or scholarly inquiry (including but not limited to curating educational collections and materials, advising on academic matters and teaching informational literacy).

A faculty member's academic freedom also entails responsibilities, including the responsibility to:

1. Exercise the above freedoms within the bounds of established disciplinary standards, the course outline of record, and relevant laws, regulations, and District policies and procedures;
2. Avoid interfering with the First Amendment freedoms of others;
3. Make it clear, when speaking as a private citizen on a matter of public concern, that they do not speak for the institution and are not speaking in their professional capacity.

Student Academic Freedom Rights and Responsibilities

Academic study within the District places students in an environment designed to present students with a full, open and thoughtful range of ideas, perspectives, research methods and research results. As a result, students are likely to encounter conflicting and controversial views. Successfully navigating this environment helps students to develop the critical inquiry and thought required for professional and personal success.

Academic freedom protects a student's freedom to learn, which includes the following rights:

1. To engage in full, open and thoughtful discussion, inquiry and expression about course content within the classroom;
2. To take reasoned, evidence-based exception to the concepts, data, theoretical frameworks, research findings and perspectives offered in any course of study and to express opposing perspectives when appropriate to the instructional method at hand and consistent with the District's Standards of Student Conduct;
3. To be evaluated solely on an academic basis and not on matters unrelated to academic standards.

As with faculty, student academic freedom entails responsibilities, including the responsibility to:

1. Recognize that discomfort is often part of the learning process.
2. Learn the content of any course of study in which they are enrolled;
3. Adhere to the standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled;
4. Respect the right of faculty to determine the curriculum and pedagogy for the course, consistent with professional training and the course outline of record;
5. Exercise the above freedoms within the bounds of relevant laws, regulations, and District policies and procedures, including the Standards of Student Conduct and the course syllabus;
6. Avoid disrupting the learning environment for the instructor or for other students;

Limitations on Academic Freedom

Academic freedom does not permit discrimination, harassment, bullying or sexual misconduct against faculty or students, as defined in applicable District policies and procedures or relevant laws or regulations. Nor does academic freedom permit expression or behavior that causes a significant disruption of the learning environment in violation of the District's policy on free speech (AP 3900) or Standards of Student Conduct (AP 5500).