

AP 4030 - Academic Freedom

SUGGESTED NEW LANGUAGE

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. Academic freedom 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 sexual 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 the extent to which Artificial Intelligence (AI) is incorporated into their teaching and assessment, ensuring alignment with disciplinary standards and 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).

Feedback collected at September 16, 2026 Senate Meeting:

BTW this feedback was awesome :)

Question: Does it apply to office hours, FLEX workshops, programs like ISW or BCLDI, interactions with students, SI trainings?

- **Answer:** Academic freedom protects scholarship, inquiry, and germane classroom instruction, in whatever work environments these things occur. From what I can tell, it does protect teachers training other teachers, if they are exercising expert disciplinary judgment and/or discussing theories, research and methodologies. **SEE REVISIONS** in opening paragraph.

One constituent reported they favor the existing AP.

Question: Can the legalese text be identified?

- **Answer:** This document does not contain any required League language.

FACULTY SECTION (first numbered section)

Question: The phrase “consistent with disciplinary standards” is confusing. How is this defined?

- **Answer:** **SEE REVISIONS** in the first three items in the faculty section and in Item 3 in the second numbered student section.

Question: On Item 2, does this mean when addressing disciplinary material, not tangents?

- **Answer:** Yes. Academic freedom does not protect tangents if they are not germane to the course outline of record and/or consistent with professional training. If someone is told not to go off on tangents, the academic freedom defense would be an argument about relevance to the COR or professional disciplinary background. If it's truly a pure tangent, academic freedom may not protect you.

Question: On Item 6, if we're going down rabbit holes and fall behind, does that mean we could get in trouble?

- **Answer:** Yes, but not for the falling behind part. If the rabbit hole is not made relevant to professional training and/or the course outline of record. Can you ramble on about unrelated stuff in your classroom with impunity? Sure, but you won't be able to rely on academic freedom as a defense if it's truly irrelevant stuff. But the point about making progress is well taken and that line will be removed.

Question: On Item 7, does it only protect expressing differences of opinion about academic matters?

- **Answer:** Yes and no. It doesn't mean you can't disagree on other topics, but Academic Freedom only protects certain expression and behaviors. Items 10 & 11 cover other protected topics. Perhaps those should be moved closer to Item 7.

Request: In the "Limitations" section, there was request for more specificity. Could see a student objecting to me teaching about white supremacy. Could protect someone arguing that this is racist against white people.

- **Answer: SEE REVISIONS**

STUDENT SECTION (first numbered section)

Question: On Item 2, are opinions not included in academic freedom?

- **Answer:** Unrelated personal opinions? No. **SEE REVISIONS**

(second numbered section)

Question: On Item 1, instead of just "learn the content", can we write "actively" learn or engage with the content?

- **Answer:** We can't require a certain level of engagement from, unless it relates to a graded assignment of some sort. A student can sit in our class, not pay attention, and not learn, and that may be their choice.

Question: On Item 6, this is very important and it should be higher on the list.

- **Will reorder list**

Question: On Item 6, can we add something about expressing opinions on the topic rather than disparaging others who disagree?

- **Answer:** I think that's adequately addressed in current Item 4, especially with the revision shown. **SEE REVISION**