

ARTICLE 10  
ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

10.1 Policy. Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the integrity of a true university. In particular, the principles of academic freedom are integral to the conception of the University as a community of scholars engaged in the pursuit of truth and the communication of knowledge in an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom. The university serves the common good through teaching, research, scholarship/creative activities, and service. The fulfillment of these functions necessarily rests upon the preservation of the intellectual freedoms of teaching, expression, research, and debate. The Trustees and the UFF therefore affirm that academic freedom is a right protected by this Agreement in addition to a faculty member’s constitutionally protected freedom of expression and is fundamental to the faculty member’s responsibility to seek and to state truth as he/she sees it. All members of the University of Florida community have a responsibility to exemplify and support these freedoms in the interests of reasoned inquiry.

(a) The Trustees and the UFF shall maintain, encourage, protect, and promote the faculty’s full academic freedom in teaching, research/creative activities, and professional, university, and employment-related public service, consistent with the exercise of academic responsibility described in Sections 10.3 and 10.4, below.

(b) In order to ensure within the University an atmosphere of academic freedom,

(1) The Trustees shall not apply any provision in this Agreement to violate a faculty member’s academic freedom or constitutional rights, nor shall a faculty member be punished for exercising such freedom or rights, either in the performance of University duties or duties outside the University.

(2) The Trustees recognize that internal and external forces may seek at times to restrict academic freedom, and the Trustees and their representatives shall maintain, encourage, protect and promote academic freedom.

10.2 Academic Freedom. Consistent with the exercise of academic responsibility described in Sections 10.3 and 10.4, below, a faculty member shall be free to discuss all relevant matters in the classroom, to explore all avenues of scholarship, research, and creative expression, to speak freely on all matters of university governance, and to speak, write, or act in an atmosphere of freedom and confidence.

(a) Teaching and Research/Creative Activities. Faculty members shall have the freedom to:

(1) Freely engage in scholarly and creative activity and publish the results.

(2) Present and discuss, frankly and forthrightly, academic subjects, including controversial material relevant to the academic subject being taught.

(3) Select instructional materials, define course content, and determine grades within general department guidelines. Consistent with the principle that the faculty member

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should be the sole judge of a student's performance in a course, the grade a faculty member determines for a student's performance shall not be changed without the faculty member's consent, except when, as the result of an official investigation of the competent evidence by a fact-finding panel of faculty members with expertise in the course material involved, the faculty member's supervisor is able to establish that

a. there was discrimination against the student in determining the grade or the grade was imposed without proper authority; or

b. the faculty member's assessment of the student's performance was not supportable by an accepted pedagogical practice or was substantially inconsistent with the basis for evaluation that the faculty member specified for the course.

(b) Service. Service includes, but is not limited to, participation in the governance processes of the University. Faculty members shall have freedom to present and discuss, frankly and forthrightly, academic subjects and policy, university governance, or other matters pertaining to the health of the University.

(c) The rights provided in this Article shall fully extend to all bargaining-unit members, regardless of whether their primary assignments include teaching and research.

10.3 Academic Responsibility of the Faculty. Academic responsibility implies the competent performance of academic duties and obligations and the commitment to support the responsible exercise of academic freedom by others. Members of the faculty have a responsibility to:

(a) Observe and uphold the ethical standards of their disciplines in the pursuit and communication of scientific and scholarly knowledge;

(b) Treat students, staff, and colleagues fairly and civilly in discharging one's duties as teacher, researcher, and intellectual mentor. Avoid any exploitation of such persons for private advantage and treat them in a manner consistent with the provisions of the article on nondiscrimination.

(c) Respect the integrity of the evaluation process, evaluating students, staff, and colleagues fairly according to the criteria and procedures specified in the evaluation process;

(d) Represent oneself as speaking for the University only when specifically authorized to do so;

(e) Participate, as appropriate, in the system of shared academic governance, especially at the department level, and seek to contribute to the civil and effective functioning of the faculty member's academic unit (program, department, school and/or college) and the University;

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(f) Perform appropriate duties assigned by the Trustees and observe applicable state and federal law and applicable published College, University, and Board of Governors regulations, policies, and procedures, provided that the assigned duty or the regulation, policy, or procedure at issue does not contravene the provisions of the Agreement or the faculty member’s right to criticize or seek revision of those duties, laws, regulations, policies, or procedures. However, faculty members seeking change must not do so in ways that unreasonably obstruct the functions of the University.

10.4 Academic Responsibility of the Trustees. Academic responsibility implies the competent performance of duties and obligations and a commitment to foster within the University a climate favorable to the responsible exercise of academic freedom. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Trustees to

(a) Maintain, encourage, protect and promote academic freedom so that it is not compromised by harassment, censorship, reprisals, or prohibited discrimination as defined in Article 11, Nondiscrimination. Recognize the right of faculty members to enjoy, without fear of institutional censorship or discipline, the same constitutional rights and freedoms as other individuals.

(b) Treat faculty members fairly and civilly in discharging the Trustees’ duties in managing the University.

(c) Respect the integrity of the evaluation process, evaluating faculty fairly and accurately according to the criteria and procedures specified in the evaluation process.

(d) Sustain principles of the system of shared governance, which recognizes that in the development of academic policies and processes the professional judgments of faculty members are of crucial importance.

(e) Prohibit persons who are not authorized students, authorized instructional staff, or authorized officials of the University from entering or interrupting faculty classrooms or laboratories during instructional time, except with prior permission from the responsible administration representative, faculty member or during legitimate emergencies. The Trustees and their representatives shall support the authority of each faculty member to have unauthorized persons removed from the faculty member’s classroom/laboratory.

(f) Prohibit disruptive student behavior, including behavior that involves violence against faculty, staff or students, threat(s) of violence, instigation of violence, malicious vandalism, possession of weapons of any type, willful disregard of a faculty member’s legitimate directions, continued use of abusive language or gestures, or other behavior that is so unruly, disruptive, harassing, or abusive that it seriously interferes with the faculty member’s ability to

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effectively communicate with other students in the class or with the ability of the student's classmates to learn. The Trustees and their representatives shall support the authority of each faculty member to have disruptive persons removed from the faculty member's classroom/laboratory.

(1) Upon receiving a report of disruptive student behavior, the Dean of Students shall act promptly to investigate and resolve the matter. Faculty may request that a disruptive student be barred from returning to the classroom. If the Dean of Students declines such a request, the Dean shall take appropriate alternative action that ensures against a recurrence of the disruptive behavior and shall inform the faculty member.

(2) A faculty member shall not be disciplined for taking reasonable action in self-defense or in defense of others.

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