

1 **PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS**

2
3 Developed for the Miramar College Academic Senate

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5 The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges adopted the “AAUP Ethics
6 Statement” and in April 1988 released a paper entitled, “Why The Academic Senate Has
7 Adopted The AAUP Ethics Statement.” The AAUP statement and explanation for its
8 adoption have been quite helpful to local senates in discussions of ethics. However,
9 community college faculty face situations which are distinctly different from those faced
10 by university professors. Furthermore, since the time the ethics statement was adopted by
11 the Academic Senate, AB1725 has become law, and the bills redefinition of the
12 community college faculty profession has resulted in an abundance of ethical questions
13 regarding faculty roles, responsibilities, and obligations. Subsequently the educational
14 policies committee of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges
15 developed a supplement to the AAUP ethics statement to offer expanded discussions on
16 several issues which typically face faculty in California’s Community Colleges.

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18 The AAUP ethics document consists of five statements outlining faculty responsibilities
19 to their disciplines, students, colleagues, institutions, and communities. The text of these
20 statements is included in this paper. They serve as an excellent foundation in principles
21 upon which decisions of ethical behavior can be based. This paper expands those
22 principles in the areas of scholarly competence, honest academic conduct of students,
23 cultural and gender sensitivity, the free pursuit of learning, avoiding exploitation of
24 faculty and students, sexual harassment, academic standards, contributing to the
25 profession, and academic freedom.

26
27 AAUP STATEMENT, PART I

28
29 DEVELOPING SCHOLARLY COMPETENCE

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31 Professors, guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of the advancement of
32 knowledge, recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them. Their primary
33 responsibility to their subject is to and to state the truth as they see it. To this end
34 professors devote their energies to developing and improving their scholarly competence.
35 They accept the obligation to exercise critical self-discipline and judgment in using,
36 extending, and transmitting knowledge. They practice intellectual honesty. Although
37 professors may follow subsidiary interests, these interests must never seriously hamper or
38 compromise their freedom of inquiry.

39
40 DEVELOPING SCHOLARLY COMPETENCE

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42 Every discipline requires scholarship. Just as doctors are obligated to keep abreast of new
43 developments in medicine and attorneys are required to know evolving laws, faculty must
44 keep up with new developments in their disciplines and in teaching methods. It is a
45 faculty member’s obligation to pursue professional and academic development enabling
46 them to infuse appropriate changes in curriculum as necessary.

47

48 In addition, faculty have academic freedom to pursue the truth as their conscience and
49 rationality would lead them. The intellectual virtues of being open-minded, fair, honest
50 and objective in the consideration of differing views, being thorough in research,
51 avoiding the “fudging” of data, reaching a well-reasoned viewpoint, and the like, should
52 all be fostered within the intellectual character of faculty member.

53

54 Of course, these attitudes toward learning are precisely what faculty are trying to get their
55 students to acquire, therefore, faculty are obligated to teach and lead by example.

56 Modeling critical thinking and attempting to instill in students intellectual virtues which
57 foster critical thinking is a key responsibility for faculty. Indoctrination, the enemy of
58 critical thinking, must be rejected by faculty.

59

60 In other words, modeling a democratic style rather than an authoritarian one is more
61 appropriate. Instead of trying to control to beliefs, opinions and values of our students,
62 encouraging pluralistic dialogue is an ethical necessity. Teaching students, by the
63 example of our classes, to respect differing views and how to benefit from the wisdom
64 often found in ideas with which one disagrees can provide a profound learning
65 experience for students.

66

67 AAUP STATEMENT. PART II

68

69 As teachers, professors encourage the free pursuit of knowledge in their students. They
70 hold before them the best scholarly and ethical standards of their discipline. Professors
71 demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as
72 intellectual guides, counselors, and mentors. Professors make every reasonable effort to
73 foster honest academic conduct and to ensure that their evaluations of students reflect
74 each student’s demonstrated academic performance. They respect the confidential nature
75 of the relationship between professor and student. Faculty avoid any exploitation,
76 harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. Faculty acknowledge significant
77 academic or scholarly assistance from students. Faculty protect student’s academic
78 freedom.

79

80 MAINTAINING HONEST ACADEMIC CONDUCT

81

82 Faculty have an obligation to prevent academic dishonesty among students. Types of
83 dishonesty include copying from others, turning in work that is not the student’s own, and
84 using references without appropriate citation. Faculty must provide a definition of
85 acceptable academic conduct. Setting up testing situations that minimize the potential for
86 misconduct is an essential strategy for preventing academic dishonesty.

87

88 Colleges should have a policy on honest academic conduct, developed by the Academic
89 Senate. Faculty are obliged to make sure that these policies are published, maintained,
90 and provide the appropriate due process standards and procedures. In addition, faculty
91 need to openly express a zero tolerance policy toward academic dishonesty. Students who
92 behave dishonestly should face the retributive consequences consistent with the

93 SDCCD's policies. (See Miramar catalog, class schedule, and SDCCD's Faculty Survival
94 Guide).

95

96 Finally, there are rules and expectations of proper academic behavior that should be
97 articulated and taught within the framework of the respective academic discipline.

98 Respect for students requires that all be held to the same standards in demeaning,
99 insulting, and discriminatory.

100

101 INSURING CULTURAL AND GENDER SENSITIVITY: RESPECTING STUDENTS 102 AS INDIVIDUALS

103

104 The ability to respect the student as an individual is an ethical imperative for faculty. All
105 students, as individuals, deserve the respect of faculty regardless of their cultural
106 background, ethnicity, race, gender, religious beliefs, political ideologies, disability,
107 sexual orientation, age, or socioeconomic status.

108

109 One of the challenges of being an educator is to reach our students at their current point
110 of understanding. When relating to students as individuals, faculty must recognize the
111 unique circumstances of each student's life. In particular, some students may possess
112 learning styles which hinder them from benefiting from traditional methods of
113 instruction. Faculty have the responsibility to seek out a variety of pedagogical tools to
114 reach those students.

115

116 Students look to faculty as role models. Not only must faculty exhibit an appreciation and
117 respect for students from all backgrounds, but it is imperative that they teach tolerance,
118 appreciation, and respect for others within their respective disciplines. Affirming
119 students' abilities, strengthening their self identities, and assisting them to reach their full
120 potential is a model worth emulating.

121

122 ENCOURAGING THE FREE PURSUIT OF LEARNING: SECURING STUDENT 123 ACCESS AND SUCCESS

124

125 One could say that the idea of open access is the quintessential expression of democracy
126 in education and that open access exemplifies the free pursuit of learning. As participants
127 in the development of educational policies at our institutions, we must remain diligent to
128 protect students' rights to freely pursue their education, watching closely to prevent
129 barriers to access, particularly to those from historically under-represented groups.

130 Faculty have an ethical and legal responsibility as educators to reduce as much as
131 possible all barriers to the pursuit of education and, indeed, to actively seek new methods
132 to assure our students' success.

133

134 AVOIDING EXPLOITATION OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS

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136 Exploitation of faculty and students can take many guises. Be it for personal financial
137 gain, sexual gratification, or any other reason, such exploitation is to be avoided at all

138 costs. It is a fundamental ethical principle that individuals in power and authority should
139 not use their advantaged position for their own gain or to advance their own self-interest.

140
141 In light of the fact that the educational profession is one in which trust between faculty
142 member and student best maximizes the results of the learning experience, it is especially
143 reprehensible for faculty to use their power and authority for such self-gratification.
144 There is perhaps no greater violation of authority and power in higher education than
145 when a faculty member harasses or exploits students. When students come to college,
146 they are embarking on a new stage in their lives. They have fears and insecurities about
147 their abilities and what the future holds for them. Many tend to view faculty with a
148 greater sense of awe than faculty deserve. They tend to trust faculty beyond areas of
149 others. To take advantage of individuals in those conditions where faculty have more
150 power and resources than the students is ethically inexcusable.

151
152 The trading of personal services or favors for grades, privilege or recognition is ethically
153 indefensible. Students must be evaluated solely on the basis of academic standards.

154
155 Faculty must become sensitive to even the perception of exploitation or harassment that
156 those with whom they interact may reasonably have. Exploitation includes the perception
157 of the one feeling exploited, not just the intentions of the initiator. The faculty member is
158 obligated to create a learning environment free of hostility and coercion.

159 160 AAUP STATEMENT, PART III

161
162 As colleagues, professors have obligations that derive from common membership in the
163 community of scholars. Professors do not discriminate against or harass colleagues. They
164 respect and defend the free inquiry of associates. In the exchange of criticism and ideas,
165 professors show due respect for the opinions of others. Professors acknowledge academic
166 debt and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues. Professors
167 accept their share of faculty responsibilities for the governance of their institution.

168 169 ESTABLISHING ACADEMIC STANDARDS

170
171 California Community Colleges have the dual mission of preparing individuals for work
172 and citizenship. The competitive society students enter and work within after they leave
173 the campus will reward them with regard to the level of their job performance. Successful
174 depend on being qualified and competent in one's career field. So, to prepare students for
175 the world of work and to avoid misleading them as to what they can expect once they
176 leave the campus, it is important to evaluate students in a manner which is consistent with
177 the academic standards of the discipline.

178
179 Academic standards should not be relative. They are determined in the context of one's
180 academic discipline by the community of scholars within the discipline. They should not
181 differ significantly from one faculty member to another within the same discipline
182 teaching the same or similar course(s). If, for example, there is significantly variation in

183 grading criteria and standards among faculty who teach courses that are prerequisites,
184 then clearly the students, the subsequent courses, and the disciplines are harmed.

185
186 Additionally, the inculcation of factual data is not the sole, or even primary, purpose of
187 higher education. The acquisition of intellectual skills is much more important.

188
189 Title 5 requires writing and critical thinking across the curriculum, but even if this were
190 not so, faculty are ethically obligated to infuse in their courses meaningful writing
191 assignments and critical thinking exercises. Evaluated assignments should aim toward the
192 student developing skills necessary in a world where success is achieved by adaptability
193 and problem solving abilities more than by information mastering. In this age of easily
194 accessible information, students could never memorize all which could be known, and, in
195 fact, there is no need to do so when thinking skills will lead them to the appropriate data
196 bank or reference text. Rather, what is needed is to be able to “learn to learn.”

197
198 Finally, the mastery that faculty have of their own discipline and scholarship entitles them
199 to their classroom and the freedom of the presentation of their subject matter, However, it
200 is unethical for a faculty member to persistently intrude unrelated material or fail to offer
201 the subject matter advertised for the course.

202

203 AAUP STATEMENT, PART IV

204

205 As member of an academic institution, professors seek above all to be effective teachers
206 and scholars. Although professors observe the stated regulations of the institution,
207 provided the regulations do not contravene academic freedom, they maintain their right to
208 criticize and seek revision. Professors give due regard to their paramount responsibilities
209 to the college in determining the amount and character of work done outside the
210 institution. When considering the interruption or termination of their service, professors
211 recognize the effect of their decision upon the program of the institution and give due
212 notice of their intentions.

213

214 CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROFESSION

215

216 Being a faculty member is a profession rather than a job or occupation. Being a faculty
217 member involves participating in a profession in which the freedom of expression is of
218 paramount importance to ensure the open exchange of ideas. As a consequence, faculty
219 necessarily are self-directed and, to a certain extent, determine the nature and quantity of
220 their workload. Faculty have the job security that the status of tenure guarantees. To
221 ensure that workload abuses do not occur, it is important for faculty to maintain standards
222 of professionalism.

223

224 Not all aspects of professionalism can be discussed here, but the following activities
225 would seem to be required for faculty to fulfill the minimal ethical duties their profession
226 requires.

227

228 First, aspiring to excellence in their discipline is the highest goal for a faculty member.
229 (See the topic “Developing Scholarly Competence” under the first ethics statement.)
230 Faculty should spend ample time in developing and perfecting their craft and guard
231 against outside activities that compromise the ability to appropriately prioritize academic
232 and professional activities.

233
234 Second, faculty should be participants, when appropriate, in faculty organizations and
235 discipline organizations. It is within these forums that faculty are kept up to date in their
236 fields and are participants in discussions relating to academic and professional matters.
237 These involvements ultimately benefit students in the classroom.

238
239 Third, in a post-AB1725 era where faculty, by law, have primary responsibility for
240 determining policy on academic and professional matters, it is important for faculty to
241 take their governance participation seriously. Faculty should attend meetings, study the
242 issues, and make suggestions on how to resolve the issues. Professional and ethical
243 faculty leadership and participation requires forthrightness and truthfulness. Every effort
244 should be made to be inclusionary in policy decisions, even if inclusion creates additional
245 responsibilities.

246
247 Finally, faculty leadership in governance carries the obligation of representation. A
248 representative of a college segment or constituency needs to respond to and respect the
249 desires and will of the constituency. A representative should avoid using participation in
250 governance to advance a self-interested agenda. A representative should, first and
251 foremost, think about what is in the best interest of students and what best contributes to
252 a student-centered college environment.

253
254 AAUP STATEMENT, PART V.

255
256 As members of their community, professors have the rights and obligations in the light of
257 their responsibilities to their subject, to their students, to their profession, and to their
258 institution. When they speak or act as private persons, they avoid creating the impression
259 of speaking or acting for the college. As citizens engaged in a profession that depends
260 upon freedom for its health and integrity, professors have a particular obligation to
261 promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic
262 freedom.

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265
266 MAINTAINING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

267
268 By nature and definition, a college campus embraces the value of academic freedom. In
269 order to pursue truth, survey the marketplace of ideas, and acquire knowledge and
270 understanding, both faculty and students must have the freedom to express their views
271 and be safe from reprisals. However, there are obligations which accompany academic
272 freedom.

273

274 The first obligation in maintaining academic freedom is to create a learning environment
275 in the classroom which fosters the free exchange of ideas. In other words, we should
276 encourage the expression of diverse views and the appreciation of those views. For
277 example, if in an “Introduction to Philosophy” class, the instructor only permitted the
278 view of theism to be expressed, that instructor would be undermining academic freedom.
279

280 The second obligation which is required to maintain academic freedom is to clearly
281 distinguish when one is speaking for oneself and when one is speaking as a representative
282 of the educational institution. The classroom should not be used as a forum for the
283 advancement of personal causes. Our obligation is to inform, not to prejudice. If a stormy
284 political issue arises, we can certainly encourage a lively discussion of all facets of the
285 situation. However, we cannot present just our view or advocate only our own position.
286 As informed private citizens, we certainly should be involved in promoting our views and
287 influencing decision-making but not in the classroom.

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