

**Resolution regarding the revision on the University Policy on Academic Freedom  
Approved by the Faculty Senate Research, Scholarship, and the Creative Arts Committee  
(RSCA) April 13, 2023  
Approved by the Faculty Senate May 18, 2023**

WHEREAS the principles of Academic Freedom are at the heart of the work of the University;  
and

WHEREAS the Faculty Senate is “empowered to review and establish policy with respect to...  
Academic Freedom, including rights and responsibilities” (CBL 1.1.a); and

WHEREAS United Academics (UA) requested that the Faculty Senate consider matters around  
electronic communications in the Academic Freedom policy in the Collective Bargaining  
Agreement between UA and the UVM administration (see CBA 21-24: 6.6); and

WHEREAS a subcommittee of the Research, Scholarship and Creative Arts Committee (RSCA)  
reviewed the previous version of the Academic Freedom policy, and considered the 2014 AAUP  
“Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications,” made additions to the Academic  
Freedom policy, and the RSCA approved these changes in April 2023;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate of the University of Vermont  
approves and adopts the revised policy that was approved by the RSCA (below); and

Be it further resolve that the Faculty Senate recommends that Faculty Senate again review the  
Academic Freedom policy within five years of its approval by the Board of Trustees of the  
University of Vermont.

## **Academic Freedom Policy**

### **103 Academic Freedom**

The Faculty Senate adopted the following statement on academic freedom on September 23,  
1954 and was approved by the Board of Trustees on October 16, 1954 and revised and adopted  
by the Faculty Senate on November 20, 2008 and approved by the Board of Trustees on  
February 7, 2009:

### **Academic Freedom and Responsibility**

We, the faculty of The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, in the spirit and  
tradition of free universities throughout the world, are agreed upon the following statement of  
principles on academic freedom and responsibility. We believe that incorporation of these  
principles into the organization of The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College will  
re-emphasize the importance of academic freedom to the basic health of the University, and also  
serve as a statement of policy on the rights and responsibilities of faculty members at this

institution. It has been our intent to state these principles in terms broad enough so that they may be valid not only in these critical times when academic freedom and personal liberty are in jeopardy both at home and abroad, but also in the future insofar as the future can be foreseen.

### **The Necessity of Academic Freedom in Higher Education**

The main purpose of a university has always been, must always be, to stimulate the thinking and the creative powers of its students and its faculty. As an institution it deals in ideas, not only old and accepted ones but new ones that may be full of explosive power. If they are explosive, they are bound to be disconcerting, even painful, to some on the campus and to many beyond its borders. Inevitably they will be called dangerous by the timid and short-sighted, but to those who really believe in the fruitfulness of human thought, the real danger would appear only if the flow of such ideas should cease. For then indeed sterility would have taken over our campus. Our faculty would no longer deserve the name of intellectuals and our students, regardless of degrees attained, could no longer claim to be educated. They would leave our campus accustomed only to the commonplace, satisfied with the mediocre, ignorant or afraid of ideas which catch fire. Academic freedom is therefore not solely a right or privilege of the faculty but is the fulfillment of the obligation on the part of the university to provide an atmosphere in which intellectual growth may take place.

### **Academic Freedom and Special Responsibilities of Faculty Members**

We subscribe to the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and the 1970 Interpretive Comments of the American Association of University Professors which provides:

- a. Faculty are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the university.
- b. Faculty are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. The intent of this statement is not to discourage what is "controversial." Controversy is at the heart of the free academic inquiry which the entire statement is designed to foster.
- c. Faculty are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of the university. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the university.

We also subscribe to the 2014 report of the American Association of University Professors on Academic Freedom and Electronic Communication which provides:

- a. Academic freedom, free inquiry, and freedom of expression within the academic community may be limited to no greater extent in electronic format than they are in print, save for the most unusual situation where the very nature of the medium itself might warrant unusual restrictions.

In addition, there are recognized qualifications which must be attained and maintained before the privilege of being a member of the academic profession can be considered a permanent one: satisfactory performance as a teacher, scholarship, and high moral standards.

### **Responsibility of the Institution to the Faculty**

The University must defend tenaciously the right of its members to think and express their thoughts freely and to make those choices within the law guaranteed to every citizen. This includes the right of dissent since any democratic institution ceases to merit the name democratic when this fundamental right is denied. Never is this duty more imperative than in those times when the public opinion of the community would restrain or curtail the free play of ideas. The universities, whose roots extend back into the centuries, have a tradition and duty to maintain an independence of judgment in the face of public opinion.

### **Academic Freedom and Tenure**

Tenure is an indispensable pre-condition for academic freedom. It is, in fact, a guarantee that the institution subscribes to the principle of academic freedom, and that its members may not be dismissed without adequate cause. Termination of tenure should occur only in cases of bona fide financial exigency in the University or when it has been demonstrated that the teacher lacks professional or moral fitness or competence as a teacher.

In the interpretation and the application of these principles we shall expect the University authorities to be quick to protect its heritage of academic freedom, in doubtful cases remembering that an excess of freedom is always less dangerous than an excess of constraint.