5.02.03.30 Academic Freedom and Responsibility

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Policy/Guideline Area

Personnel Policies

Applicable Divisions

TCATs, Community Colleges

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the criteria and process regarding academic freedom and responsibility at community colleges and technical colleges governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents.

Definitions

Academic Freedom - freedom in the classroom in discussing his or her subject, being careful not to introduce into the teaching unrelated subject matter, freedom in research and in the publication of the results, and faculty participation in institutional governance.

Academic Responsibility - responsibility for the development and delivery of educational programs and services to students, obligation to participate in tenure and promotion review of colleagues as specified in policy, and obligation to take appropriate professional action against faculty members who are derelict in discharging their professional responsibilities.

Policy/Guideline

Each college in the System is required to develop a policy on academic freedom and responsibility. As a minimum, institutional policies must cite, be in compliance with, and incorporate all the procedures outlined in Board Policy 5.02.03.30. Once the institution has developed its policy, it must be forwarded to TBR System Office for review and approval by the Chancellor or the Chancellor's designee.

Procedures

I. Minimum institutional policy requirements

A. The following policy of the Tennessee Board of Regents on academic freedom and responsibility is applicable to all colleges within the System. The statement in Article II on academic freedom and responsibility may be adopted by each college, or a college may adopt an alternative statement, provided that the statement is consistent with the procedures set forth herein.

B. College policies on academic freedom and responsibility must cite and specifically acknowledge compliance with the Board Policy on Academic Freedom and Responsibility (5.02.03.30). Likewise, college policies must embody and communicate clearly as a minimum all provisions, definitions, and stipulations of the Board policy.

II. Academic Freedom and Responsibility

A. The faculty member is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his or her subject, being careful not to introduce into the teaching unrelated subject matter.

B. The faculty member is entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties, including and consistent with any and all policies pertaining to clinical and research practices. Research for financial gain must be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution, which is documented and signed by the faculty member and the appropriate academic officer(s).

C. The faculty member is a citizen, a member of a learned profession, and an officer of an educational institution. When the faculty member speaks or writes as a citizen, they should be free from college 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 the profession and the college by the faculty member's utterances. Hence, a faculty

member 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 do not speak for the college.

D. Academic freedom is essential to fulfill the ultimate objectives of an educational institution - the free search for and exposition of truth - and applies to teaching, research, and faculty participation in institutional governance. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth, and academic freedom in teaching is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the faculty member in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. Faculty participation in institutional governance is fundamental to the development and maintenance of effective academic policies, national and regional accreditation, and shared responsibility for the delivery of educational programs and services to students.

   1. Implicit in the principle of academic freedom are the corollary responsibilities of the faculty who enjoy that freedom. Incompetence, indolence, intellectual dishonesty, failure to carry out assigned duties, serious moral dereliction, arbitrary and capricious disregard of standards of professional conduct - these and other grounds as set forth in TBR Policy 5.02.03.70 may constitute adequate cause for dismissal or other disciplinary sanctions against faculty members.

E. The right to academic freedom imposes upon the faculty an equal obligation to take appropriate professional action against faculty members who are derelict in discharging their professional responsibilities. The faculty member has an obligation to participate in tenure and promotion review of colleagues as specified in policy. Thus, academic freedom and academic responsibility are interdependent, and academic tenure is adopted as a means to protect the former while promoting the latter.

F. While academic tenure is essential for the protection of academic freedom, the full benefits and responsibilities of academic freedom extend to all individuals teaching in the TBR System, whether or not they are eligible for tenure.

Sources

Authority

T.C.A. § 49-8-203

History

April 2, 2004; Board Meeting, Dec. 13, 2012; Revised September 20, 2013; Revised TBR Board Meeting September 19 & 20, 2019.

Related Polices

5.02.03.70 Academic Tenure for Community Colleges