

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Purpose

Academic freedom and responsibility are fundamental characteristics of the Western Dakota Technical College (WDTC) learning environment. They are the guardians of integrity and quality in higher education. Academic freedom is necessary so faculty members can teach their own courses and so students can acquire the learning they need without fear of reprisal.

II. General Statement of Policy

A. Academic Freedom -

Faculty and Students

- Faculty and students have the right to express their views—in speech, writing, and through electronic communication, both on and off campus—without fear of sanction or retaliation unless the manner of expression substantially impairs the rights of others or, in the case of faculty members, those views demonstrate that they are professionally ignorant, incompetent, or dishonest with regard to their discipline or fields of expertise.
- Faculty members and students have the right to study and research topics they choose and to draw what conclusions they find consistent with their research. It does not prevent others from judging whether their work is valuable and their conclusions sound.
- Political, religious, or philosophical beliefs of politicians, faculty, students, administrators, and members of the public will not be imposed on any member of the WDTC community.
- Faculty members and students have the right to seek remedy or request a hearing if they believe their rights have been violated.
- Faculty members and students have the right to disagree with administrative policies or proposals without fear of reprisal.
- Faculty members and students have the right to challenge one another's views and not be penalized for holding these views.

Faculty

- A faculty member's authority to assign grades to students, so long as the grades are not capricious or unjustly punitive, will be protected. More broadly, academic freedom encompasses both the individual and institutional right to maintain academic standards.

- Faculty members will be protected from unfounded student complaints or charges. WDC will provide a proper grievance process where the burden of proof lies with those who brought the charges.
- Faculty members have substantial latitude—within the bounds created by WDC policy, approved curriculum, and each course's master syllabus—in deciding how to teach the courses for which they are responsible.
- Serious charges against a faculty member will be heard before a committee of his or her peers. Faculty members will be provided the right to due process, including the assumption that the burden of proof lies with those who brought the charges. Faculty have the right to present counterevidence and confront their accusers and be assisted by an attorney in serious cases if they choose.

Faculty Responsibilities

- Faculty will carry out assigned teaching, research, and service duties in a professional manner.
- Faculty have the responsibility, as teachers, to refrain from introducing material which is not consistent with their teaching duties and professional competence and which has no significant bearing on the subject matter of the course as approved by WDC.
- Faculty have the responsibility to pursue excellence and intellectual honesty in teaching, research, other creative endeavors, and service activities.
- Faculty have the responsibility to teach courses within the scope of WDC policy, approved curriculum, and each course's master syllabus.
- Faculty have the responsibility to encourage students and colleagues to engage in discussion and inquiry and to evaluate student and colleague performance on a scholarly basis.
- Faculty have the responsibility to work in a professional manner with appropriate individuals and bodies to encourage the search for knowledge, its exposition, and WDC's continuing quest for excellence.
- Faculty have the responsibility to carefully differentiate their official activities as faculty members from their personal activities as citizens. Faculty also must, when the situation warrants, make it clear that they do not speak for WDC when they speak as private citizens.
- Faculty have the responsibility to establish goals for student learning that cultivate intended learning and assess student achievement while working collaboratively with colleagues in their departments as well as with relevant administrators to achieve these goals.
- Faculty have the responsibility to develop the personal qualities of students such as a strong sense of responsibility, being able to accept criticism from others, tolerance of ambiguity, and understanding and accepting the importance of academic honesty.

III. Definitions - None

IV. Reporting Procedures

WDTC documents information regarding academic freedom in its Faculty Handbook and information regarding freedom of learning in its Student Handbook.

V. Dissemination of Policy and Training

A. This policy is posted on the WDTC website.

B. Faculty and students are also informed through their respective handbooks.

Legal references: None

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