

Resolution: Reaffirming Academic Freedom

Whereas, academic freedom is a cornerstone of higher education, protected by CUNY policies, the PSC contract, and widely accepted principles laid out by the AAUP, and is essential to the mission of colleges and universities as spaces of open inquiry, critical thought, and democratic engagement; and

Whereas, in today's political environment, especially as related to current White House policies, CUNY faces new and virulent challenges to academic freedom; and

Whereas the United States now faces what an AAUP official has called “the gravest challenge to academic freedom, one that exacerbates all the others: the steady erosion of the tenure system and the concomitant and explosive expansion of contingent, frequently part-time faculty employment;”ⁱ and

Whereas the AAUP has declared that the “freedom to teach includes the right of faculty members to select the materials, determine the approach to the subject, make the assignments, and assess student academic performance in teaching activities for which they are individually responsible, without having their decisions subject to the veto of a department chair, dean, or other administrative officer. Teaching duties that are commonly shared among a number of faculty members require a significant amount of coordination and the imposition of a certain degree of structure, often involving a need for agreement on such matters as general course content, syllabi, and examinations. In a multi-section course taught by several faculty members, responsibility is often shared among the instructors for identifying the texts to be assigned to students. Common course syllabi and examinations are also typical but should not be imposed by departmental or administrative fiat. The shared responsibility bespeaks a shared freedom, which trumps the freedom of an individual faculty member to assign a textbook that he or she alone considers satisfactory. The individual's freedom in other respects, however, remains undiluted. Individuals should be able to assign supplementary materials to deal with subjects that they believe are inadequately treated in the required textbook. Instructors also have the right to discuss in

the classroom what they see as deficiencies in the textbook; doing so could turn out to be as effective in engaging the students as requiring them to use an alternate textbook. These principles apply equally to faculty in the tenure system and those with contingent appointments. Although, under these circumstances, the decisions of the group may prevail over the dissenting position of a particular individual, the deliberations leading to such decisions ought to involve substantial reflection and discussion by all those who teach the courses. The department should have a process for periodically reviewing curricular decisions and altering them based on a consensus of the appropriate teaching faculty, subject to review at other levels of governance;”ⁱⁱ now therefore

Be it resolved that the Lehman Senate chooses at this time to reaffirm the academic freedom rights of all faculty, full-time or part-time, those in the tenure system as well as contingent/adjunct faculty; and

Be it further resolved that, in particular, adjunct faculty (including those teaching multi-section courses) should not be subjected to having their freedom to teach impaired, whether by other faculty, by deans, or by administrators; and

Be it finally resolved that adjunct faculty should (like any other faculty member) play a significant role in determining how to approach their subject, make assignments, and assess student academic performance.

ⁱ <https://www.aaup.org/academe/issues/winter-2021/do-adjuncts-have-academic-freedom-or-why-tenure-matters>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.aaup.org/reports-publications/aaup-policies-reports/policy-statements/freedom-teach>