

Academic Freedom and Responsibility

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity on the application of academic freedom at Dyersburg State Community College (DSCC) and the responsibilities placed on both tenured and non-tenured instructors that the exercise of academic freedom engenders.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all faculty members, whether adjunct or full-time, tenured or non-tenured, and complies with Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) Policy 05:02:03:30 – Academic Freedom and Responsibility.

III. Policy

DSCC recognizes the principle of academic freedom, pursuant to which:

1. The faculty member is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his or her subject, being careful not to introduce into the teaching controversial matter which has no relation to the subject;
2. The faculty member is entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of his or her other academic duties. In the event that a faculty or group of faculty participate in and/or conduct research that may pose risk or liability to the institution and/or its faculty, staff, or students, the researcher should send the research proposal for review to his/her Academic Dean and the DSCC Conflict of Interest Disclosure Review Committee before research commences. An example of such research includes but is not limited to that which involves human subjects. Research for financial gain must be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution, which is documented in writing and signed by the faculty member and the appropriate academic officer(s); and
3. 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, he/she should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but his/her special position in the community imposes special obligations. As a man or woman of learning and an educational officer, he/she should remember that the public may judge the profession and the institution by the faculty member's utterances. Hence, a faculty member should at all times be accurate and truthful, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that he/she does not speak for the institution.
4. Academic freedom is essential to fulfilling the ultimate objectives of an educational institution – the free search for an 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 to the protection of the rights of the faculty member in teaching and of the student 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. 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, and arbitrary and capricious disregard of standards of professional conduct (these and other grounds as set forth in TBR Policy 05:02:03:70 – “Policy on Academic Tenure at Tennessee Board of Regents’ Community Colleges) may constitute adequate cause for dismissal or other disciplinary sanctions against faculty members.

5. 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 reviews of colleagues as specified in DSCC 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. While academic tenure is essential for the protection of academic freedom, all faculty members, tenured or non-tenured, have an equal right to academic freedom and bear the same academic responsibilities implicit in that freedom.

IV. Compliance

All faculty members, whether part-time or full-time, tenured or non-tenured, must adhere to this policy.

V. Definitions

Adjunct Faculty – All faculty members whose temporary appointments are based on demand each semester.

Full-time Faculty – All faculty members employed on a continuing basis, expected to exceed one year, and who are scheduled to carry a full teaching load or its equivalent. In addition, full-time faculty members hold academic rank as instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor.

Tenured Faculty – Those faculty members who have been approved for tenure by the Tennessee Board of Regents. Tenure is awarded only to those members of the faculty who have exhibited professional excellence and outstanding abilities sufficient to demonstrate that their future services and performances justify the degree of permanence afforded by academic tenure.

Non-Tenured Faculty – Those faculty members who have not yet been approved for tenure by the Tennessee Board of Regents.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure Review Committee: see DSCC Policy 12:05:01:00

VI. Revision History

Policy written May 2005; policy revised October 2012; approved by Administrative Council on 12/14/2012. Revised October 2016; approved by Administrative Council October 28, 2016; approved by Administrative Council February 23, 2023; approved with changes by Administrative Council October 24, 2024