

# Academic Freedom

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## District Policy

The MiraCosta College Community College District recognizes the free pursuit of knowledge and the free exchange of ideas as core tenets of academic freedom.

As a fundamental concept, academic freedom ensures institutions of higher education function for the common good and are constructed on a foundation of genuine trust. It represents an understanding of mutual respect in valuing how faculty and students engage in conversations and learning. The district superintendent/president and Board of Trustees will actively and openly work toward fostering an environment characterized by openness, tolerance, and civility and an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom exists and is protected for all constituencies, including faculty and students.

Academic freedom must always be accompanied by academic responsibility. This responsibility emphasizes the obligation to examine, test, and interpret all knowledge appropriate to a discipline or major area of study, to avoid bias on controversial topics, and to present conclusions and interpretations supported by evidence with consideration for the impact on students and colleagues. Employees and students should at all times strive for accuracy and engage in respectful discourse, especially when opinions differ. All constituencies must be mindful of the district's policies on ethical conduct (BP 3050), diversity, equity, and inclusion (BP 3400), non-discrimination (BP 3410), and equal opportunity (BP 3420).

To promote and support the intellectual, socioeconomic, and socioemotional growth of students, all faculty require the assurances and protections academic freedom affords. Academic decisions should be based solely on intellectual standards that are relevant to the subject matter under consideration and consistent with the institution's mission and core values. Neither students nor faculty shall be disadvantaged or evaluated on the basis of their views and perspectives. The district will defend and support any tenured or untenured faculty member who, while maintaining the high standards of the profession, finds their freedom of expression attacked or curtailed.

In the classroom context, both virtual and in person, faculty are expected to present data and information fairly and objectively, to ensure students have access to varying points of view, and to acknowledge and defend the free inquiry of students in the exchange of criticism and ideas. Academic freedom gives students the right to express and to defend their views, to question, and to differ with the views of their instructors or the district without penalty. Academic freedom gives faculty the right to distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline and to interpret their fields and communicate conclusions without interference or penalty.

Outside of the classroom setting, faculty have the right to research, present, and publish without interference or sanction, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties. Research for financial gain shall be based upon an

understanding with the MiraCosta Community College District as outlined in Board Policy/Administrative Procedure 3715: Intellectual Property. When faculty speak or write as citizens, authorities of their discipline, and community representatives of MiraCosta College, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but this freedom carries with it a responsibility to at all times be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinions of others, and make every effort to indicate they are not speaking on behalf of the institution.

*(Source: MCCCD Board Policy 4030. All MiraCosta College board policies and administrative procedures are located on the Board of Trustees webpage.)*