



Affirmation of Principles of Academic Freedom in Relation to the Present Crisis

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Wesleyan AAUP affirms the principle of academic freedom as restated in the national AAUP's October 24 statement on [Academic Freedom in Times of War](#), and we amplify the call on our university administrators to “fully protect the academic freedom of their faculties to teach, conduct research, and speak out about important issues both on and off campus”:

It is in tumultuous times that colleges' and universities' stated commitments to protect academic freedom are most put to the test. As the Israel-Hamas war rages and campus protests proliferate, institutional authorities must refrain from sanctioning faculty members for expressing politically controversial views and should instead defend their right, under principles of academic freedom, to do so.

Since its founding in 1915, a primary focus of the American Association of University Professors has been to develop and promulgate standards to protect, defend, and strengthen faculty academic freedom in higher education. The [1940 Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure](#), jointly developed by the AAUP and the American Association of Colleges and Universities, articulates how academic freedom in teaching, research, institutional decision-making, and extramural speech is essential to the mission of educational institutions in a democratic society. Hundreds of colleges and universities have adopted policies to protect academic freedom based on the 1940 *Statement*. Those commitments to academic freedom have helped establish the US educational system as a model for higher education across the world.

At the heart of academic freedom is the protection of free and open inquiry, including expression of controversial ideas that some may consider wrong or offensive. Academic freedom not only protects faculty speech in teaching, research, and institutional decision-making; it also protects the right “to address the larger community with regard to any matter of social, political, economic, or other interest” (AAUP, [Protecting an Independent Faculty Voice: Academic Freedom after Garcetti v. Ceballos](#)). Since the AAUP recognizes that right as a crucial component of academic freedom, extramural speech, which often occurs in highly charged political moments, must not be subject to institutional sanction.

Institutional policies that affirm a commitment to academic freedom have little meaning if administrators ignore or selectively apply them in tense or stressful times, as they have all too often done in the past. College and university officials are obligated to defend academic freedom; they must resist demands from politicians, trustees, donors, students and their parents, alumni, or other parties to punish faculty members for exercising that freedom. At this moment of heightened tension on college and university campuses, the AAUP calls on college and university administrations to fully protect the academic freedom of their faculties to teach, conduct research, and speak out about important issues both on and off campus.

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