

YUBA COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC SENATE
POLICY AND PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: FACULTY ETHICS STATEMENT
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RESPONSIBILITY TO DISCIPLINE

As our disciplines initially attracted us by feeding our intellectual curiosity and quenching our thirst for knowledge through education, we should seek to sustain this enthusiasm by keeping current in our fields, attending conferences, continuing our affiliation with professional organizations, taking courses and by using staff development, sabbatical leaves, exchange programs and similar means continuously to develop our expertise and teaching methods.

Devoting “energies to developing and improving scholarly competence” is a means by which faculty can successfully shoulder this responsibility and model behavior consistent with the standards of the educational community (Statement of Professional Ethics, 1987). To this end, faculty should utilize developmental opportunities to grow and seek to maintain professional standards through tenure review and peer evaluation processes.¹ Exercising self-discipline and judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge is strengthened by such continual growth.

RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS

We have obligations to students not only in class, but also outside the classroom. As faculty, we encourage students to make use of our office hours, to become full participants in the college community, and to partake of the broad range of extracurricular activities available to them. Further, we continually seek to ensure that students have adequate support services such as testing, counseling, placement, learning resources, career and transfer information. We do much to instill their interest in life-long learning if we spark their intellectual curiosity and critical thinking, foster their leadership and citizenship by serving as their club advisors, and protect their academic experience by ensuring academic honesty in the classroom.

RESPONSIBILITY TO COLLEAGUES

Faculty members “have obligations that derive from common membership in the community of scholars” (Statement of Professional Ethics, 1987). It is of utmost importance that we actively involve ourselves in the hiring process of new faculty and fulfill our responsibilities toward meaningful evaluation, retention, mentoring, and promotion of all new faculty members (including part time, contract and other). Serving

¹ For a complete review of the importance of faculty development, see the Academic Senate paper entitled “Faculty Development: A Senate Issue,” April 2000

on committees that recommend policies and make decisions relating to students, courses, and professional leaves are also obligations faculty accept.

Helping others in difficult times and broadening success by sharing information, mentoring, offering dispassionate advice, and team-teaching are all services that can be offered to ensure professionalism toward colleagues and, perhaps more importantly, can help foster and model the professional and ethical ideals that collectively guide institutional behavior.²

RESPONSIBILITY TO ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

Contractual obligations require faculty to meet classes, keep office hours, and perhaps to serve on committees. These are clearly ethical as well as contractual obligations. Less obvious is the responsibility to exercise due diligence in monitoring the integrity of the institution as it applies to the conditions of their workplace; faculty have an ongoing right and responsibility to critique their institution in order to improve it. Conversely, faculty must consider the operation of the college as a whole and contribute positively to the academic climate of the institution.

Because ethical and professional integrity is often guided only through unwritten social contracts within an institution, responsibilities toward creating a safe, trusting, non-hostile and open learning environment are paramount³

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

When faculty serve the community by participating in speakers' bureaus or college-sponsored activities, they simultaneously serve the institution and are usually explicitly associated with it. More subtly, faculty serve as models to both students and community by voting in public elections, by participating in political activities, by obeying the laws or engaging in civil resistance, by working for and contributing to charitable events, or by serving in secular and religious institutions that reflect personal beliefs. These activities require faculty to resist using positions or classrooms as bully pulpits and to exercise judgment in making clear to others when-or if-they represent the institution.

Once again, utilizing developmental opportunities to nurture and maintain established standards within the educational community through tenure review, peer evaluation and mentoring processes will help ensure and strengthen self-discipline, judgment and the practice of ethical behavior.⁴

² For a complete review of the importance of faculty development, see the Academic Senate paper entitled "Guidelines for Developing a Faculty Evaluation Process." Spring 1990

³ See Academic Senate paper entitled "Toward a Nonviolent Campus Climate Conflict Resolution to assist in fostering a positive academic climate," Spring 1996

⁴ For a complete discussion of the importance of faculty evaluation through the use of collaboration, mentoring, etc. see the Academic Senate paper entitled "Accreditation: Evaluating the Collective Faculty," Spring 1990.

RESPONSIBIITY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONE'S OWN AND OTHERS'SCHOLARLY COMPETENCE

Faculty develop the critical thinking skills of those in our academic community when they honor dissent predicated on rational thought. There is a difference between being an authority in one's discipline and adopting an authoritarian pedagogical style. Authority in one's discipline is achieved through careful inquiry and critical reflection, activities that are suppressed by an authoritarian pedagogy. A key responsibility for faculty is "modeling and teaching critical thinking and attempting to instill in students the intellectual virtues that foster this critical thought." (Academic Senate, 1994) Faculty should be encouraged to teach and lead by example.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR HONEST ACADEMIC CONDUCT

While student handbooks, catalogues and other college publications may explicate existing rules and regulations governing both academic and social behavior on campus, faculty reinforce respect for these policies by ensuring that students observe them in their presence. For example, by repeating or elaborating on practices of academic honesty (or dishonesty) in our syllabi and handouts, we can promulgate appropriate scholarly behavior. Faculty who model and teach the means by which students can avoid academic dishonesty, nurture the overall integrity of the learning community in which both groups work.

RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD CULTURAL AND GENDER SENSITIVITY

"Respecting students as individuals is an ethical imperative" (Academic Senate, 1994) Mere tolerance, simply putting up with or enduring, is inadequate. Responsibilities to cultural and gender sensitivity should go beyond tolerance and deference. We should couple this respect for student with the recognition of difference and the appreciation of similarity embodied within a robust concept of tolerance. Faculty should not only teach about such sensitivities, but should model them as well.⁵

RESPONSIBILITY TO ENCOURAGE THE PURSUIT OF LEARNING

"The idea of open access is the quintessential expression of democracy in education" (Academic Senate, 1994). Responsibility to the pursuit of learning includes our commitment to a postsecondary education for every California citizen as defined by the California Community Colleges' 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education.⁶ Vigilance in resistance and opposition to any recommendations that would diminish students' educational options is clearly a faculty responsibility. Addressing barriers to educational

⁵ For a thought provoking discussion on cultural diversity, please access "The Challenge of Cultural Diversity in California Community Colleges" by Karen Sue Grosz on the Senate website at <http://www.academicssenate.cc.ca.us>

⁶ This central tenet has been attacked in the 1994 review "Master Plan in Focus," and the report of the Little Hoover Commission, "Open Doors, Open Minds," both of which proposed to penalize students who dropped classes or deviated from their education plans.

access and student success is crucial, especially for historically underrepresented students.⁷

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS OF TRUST AND SENSITIVITY

The learning experience is best when trust exists between faculty member and student. “Faculty must be cognizant of the possible perceptions...students may [form] in response to faculty-student interactions”; faculty should align their actions with the fundamental tenet that “individuals in power and authority should not use their advantaged position for their own gain or self-interest” (Academic Senate, 1994). Students should be assured that their learning occurs within environments that privilege probity.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The dual mission of the community college is to prepare student for success in both careers and participatory citizenship. Lowering standards to pass students along undermines their abilities to meet future challenges. Maintaining sound and fair standards while helping students to understand those standards together provide a realistic view of what can be expected in other educational institutions and in the larger society beyond the college campus.⁸

RESPONSIBILITY TO MAINTAIN ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Being a faculty member means being a colleague in a profession where freedom of expression ensures the open exchange of ideas.⁹ Whereas in the classroom opinions do not all have equal weight, all views are encouraged. As a part of faculty obligation to infuse the skills of critical thinking, faculty seek to create classroom environments that foster the free exchange of ideas.

⁷ See Academic Senate paper entitled “Student Equity: Proposal for Action,” Fall 1991

⁸ See Academic Senate Paper entitled “Professional Standards for Faculty for a full discussion on professional standards for faculty,” Spring 1987

⁹ Also see Academic Senate paper entitled “Academic Freedom and Tenure: A Faculty Perspective for a discussion of academic freedom,” Spring 1998