



Academic Freedom Policy

(Revised, 2018)

Academic freedom is a critical component in higher education. The goal of Academic Freedom at Lawson State is to provide faculty and students with the ability to search for truth and be provided with free and unfettered access to discuss such truths. Academic Freedom does not center on the faculty member or the institution, but rather, it centers on the search for the truth and the full discovery of facts on a given topic.

Academic freedom expresses itself as the freedom of faculty to engage in scholarly activities, publications of choice, research opportunities and be able to teach in an environment that promotes open inquiry and full discovery of a topic or subject matter.

The rights of the faculty member and the student to Academic Freedom is not exclusive or without any restraints. These rights do come with important duties and responsibilities. All faculty members at Lawson State Community College are responsible for engaging in ethical and factual teaching practices and scholarly activities to include, research, guest lecturing, publications and other creative ventures within the educational realm as well as other academic duties assigned.

Equally important, all faculty members have full freedom in teaching and discussing the subject matter, but this freedom comes with the responsibility to deliver accurate and factual information and content to students (that must center on its accuracy and factuality). Indeed, the accuracy and facts of the information being taught are key in the protections of Academic Freedom.

Controversy in higher education should be anticipated, for it is common in the practice of an educator utilizing their Academic Freedom. However, controversial topics should, as previously discussed, be focused on factual and accurate and up-to-date information. And, while it is also proper and acceptable for a faculty member to inject their personal knowledge and even their belief structure as they express their Academic Freedom (to teach), it not appropriate to blur the lines between what is factual and what is a personal belief. Thus, Academic Freedom requires faculty to be deliberate and clear in what is considered accepted and rooted "knowledge" on a topic, versus one's own personal beliefs or experiences.

Faculty members serve as agents of the College and represent the College in their actions and play a significant and meaningful role at the institution and the community at large. As such, Lawson State

faculty should always exhibit the highest standards of integrity and ethics in their speech, behavior, publications, scholarly work and all other academic pursuits. Faculty members are free from censorship by the institution unless the faculty member engages in following: (1) deceitful practices, unethical or untruthful speech or writings; (2) bringing up unrelated controversial topics (in the classroom) that only serve a personal intent but is not connected to the subject being taught in any respect; (3) engaging in discussion in class that violates FERPA--student privacy issues; (4) disparaging co-workers, staff or the institution within a classroom setting for personal aims that are not connected in any respect to the subject being taught; (5) not teaching or implementing the approved curriculum (that has been officially approved and adopted by subject-matter faculty, lead instructors and Department Chairpersons)

In the social media environment or within social settings or within the community at large, faculty members should always stay mindful that the public will assess their behavior, their speech, their actions and judge accordingly. Therefore, faculty should always celebrate differing opinions and healthy debate; promote the importance and significance of seeking the truth and demonstrate healthy restraint (if controversy surfaces). Further, it is also vital that Lawson State faculty make every effort to express that he or she is not speaking or acting on behalf of the College in such community settings or within Social Media arenas.

This policy applies to all full-time, part-time and online faculty members at Lawson State Community College.

Approved by the General Faculty, November 8, 2013. Revised and adopted by the Academic Standards Committee on November 13, 2018. Formally Approved and Adopted by the Administrative Cabinet of Lawson State Community College, November 26, 2018.