



Faculty Council of Community Colleges
Supporting Students and Faculty Faced with Rising Ideological and Anti-
Intellectual Attacks on Academic Freedom
AAC4. 2022-2023
Passed by the FCCC
April 1, 2023

WHEREAS, the State University of New York system, including its shared governance bodies (the University Faculty Senate (UFS) and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges (FCCC)) have repeatedly reaffirmed their support for the academic freedom of faculty to teach their course material as they see fit as recently as October 2014 in a FCCC “Position Statement on Academic Freedom” and “White Paper on Academic Freedom,” and

WHEREAS, SUNY has recently reformed its General Education Program to include a required knowledge area related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (DEISJ), and

WHEREAS, attacks on DEISJ education are occurring nationally, and several states, such as Florida, have sought invasively and repeatedly to violate the academic freedom of their faculty, including the following actions in Florida during the last 27 months:

- HB 233 (Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity Act) allowed secret recording of lectures, forbade the restriction of hate speech on campus, and created a database recording faculty’s political positions (Spring 2021), and
- The University of Florida attempted to prevent their faculty from testifying in trials related to voting rights (Fall 2021, struck down in District Court), and
- HB 7 (Stop W.O.K.E. Act) restricted Florida educators and students from discussing and learning about issues related to race and gender (Spring 2022, implementation currently barred by judicial order), and
- HB 7044 required postsecondary institutions to: change accreditors with every cycle, weakening the role of the regional accreditation body; make general education course syllabi public; and weakened the protections of tenure (Spring 2022), and
- SB 520 exempted college and university presidential searches from transparency requirements (Spring 2022), and

- The Florida State Department of Education demanded information from all colleges on activities related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Critical Race Theory (CRT), without defining those terms (January 2023), and
- Governor’s Policy and Budget Office demanded information about the medical treatment of transgender students and employees (January 2023), and
- Presidents of the Florida Colleges released a statement declaring DEI and CRT “harmful to higher education “ (January 2023), and
- The New College Board of Trustees and President were replaced by radical ideologues, who then dissolved the office handling Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (March 2023), and
- The Florida Board of Governors has formally implemented post-tenure review for faculty at the University of Florida campuses, weakening the protections of tenure (March 2023).

WHEREAS, the majority of these laws and actions cited above impact not only faculty but also the students they serve: students who are less empowered and protected against intrusive government interference into intellectual and personal matters, and who are less able to advocate for policies that may benefit them and/or oppose policies that may harm them, and

WHEREAS, the AAUP holds that institutions have “no moral right to bind the reason or the conscience of any professor,” and explicitly charges institutions to uphold the public trust, when defining Academic Authority, and

WHEREAS, any publicly-funded institution that advocates a wholesale adoption or rejection of political ideologies or nullifies academic freedom shall lose the public trust and access to public funding, and

WHEREAS, SUNY faculty and presidents are already receiving objections to our support for the SUNY General Education Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice standards, and

WHEREAS, in at least one case (Florida), the president of the statewide faculty union, has reached out in an open letter “to professional organizations across the country and the globe to ask for statements of solidarity that defend the foundational principles of higher education: academic freedom, tenure, and constitutional protections that ensure the free exchange of ideas,” and

WHEREAS, SUNY seeks to diversify student and faculty recruitment and hiring practices, and the affected states are known for their diverse populations, and

WHEREAS, the First Amendment of the US Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, and these legislative efforts violate student and faculty freedom of speech, and

WHEREAS, the changes and other policies that have been implemented set dangerous precedents, violate the academic freedom of students and professors, and threaten the academic integrity and mission of institutions of higher education, and

WHEREAS, these attacks on academic freedom disproportionately target marginalized and at-risk students and faculty.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the FCCC declares our solidarity with all faculty and students and calls upon the SUNY Chancellor to join us in this fight, and

RESOLVED, that the FCCC calls upon the SUNY Chancellor to advocate with the Biden administration for a condemnation of this type of legislation in the strongest possible terms, and

RESOLVED, that the FCCC calls upon the SUNY Chancellor to seek federal review of accreditation standards for states participating in anti-intellectualism of this nature, which clearly violates academic freedom, and

RESOLVED, that the FCCC calls upon the SUNY Chancellor to champion academic freedom for educational institutions by supporting development of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts by faculty across the nation, and

RESOLVED, that the FCCC reaffirms the AAUP definition of academic freedom established in 1913 and wholly supported by the federal government for over one hundred years, and

RESOLVED, that the FCCC calls upon SUNY to create a program similar to the border-state tuition agreement to be offered to Florida, North Carolina, Texas, and any other students in the nation who seek to pursue their studies in an environment of transparency and academic freedom, and

RESOLVED, that the FCCC calls upon the SUNY Chancellor to expand faculty and student recruitment from states affected by rising ideological and anti-intellectual legislation, which would also diversify SUNY's recruitment efforts, and

RESOLVED, that the FCCC calls upon the SUNY Chancellor to pursue protections for academic freedom, tenure, and freedom of speech on college campuses at the Federal level to stand against ideological and anti-intellectual legislation in our country.

PC/CC/MD/AM/DM, 3/23

ENCLOSURES

[White Paper on Academic Freedom](#), October 2014 Faculty Council of Community Colleges

[Academic Freedom Position Statement](#) October 2014, Faculty Council of Community Colleges

[1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure, Appendix I](#)

[Academic Freedom and the Common Good](#)

[Special Committee to Report on Academic Freedom in Florida, January 26, 2023](#)

[American Council on Education and Pen America Release Resource Guide to Help Higher Education Leaders Defend Academic Freedom](#)