

Faculty Handbook & Professional Ethics
Statement of Professional Ethics
Approved by Faculty Senate on March 15, 2016

I. Preamble

The university seeks to provide and sustain an environment conducive to sharing, extending, and critically examining knowledge and values, and to furthering the search for wisdom. Effective performance of these central functions requires that faculty members be free within their respective fields of competence to pursue and to teach the truth in accord with appropriate standards of scholarly inquiry. The faculty's privileges and protections, including that of tenure, rest on the mutually supportive relationships between the faculty's special professional competence, its academic freedom, and the central functions of the university.

These relationships, along with a commitment to respecting the rights and dignity of all persons, are the source of the professional responsibilities of faculty members. The American Association of University Professors has long recognized that membership in the academic profession carries with it special responsibilities, and since 1970 the faculty of West Liberty have accepted the AAUP's general standards that set forth a variety of responsibilities assumed by all members of the profession.

The intent of the Statement of Professional Ethics is to protect academic freedom, to help preserve the highest standards of teaching and scholarship, and to advance the mission of the university as an institution of higher learning. Part II of this statement sets forth the responsibility of the university to maintain conditions and rights supportive of the faculty's pursuit of the university's central functions. Part III of this statement elaborates standards of professional conduct, derived from the general professional consensus regarding certain precepts basic to acceptable faculty behavior. Articulating examples of unacceptable types of behavior serves to both verify that a consensus of minimally acceptable behavior does, in fact, exist and to give fair notice the departures from these minimal standards may give rise to forms of disciplinary action.

II. Professional Rights of Faculty

In support of the university's central functions as an institution of higher learning, a major responsibility of the administration is to protect and encourage the faculty in its teaching, learning, research, and public service. The faculty and administration have a shared interest in preserving conditions hospitable to these pursuits. Accordingly, the authority to discipline faculty members in appropriate cases derives from a shared recognition that the purpose of discipline is to preserve these conditions. As they pertain to faculty, these conditions include, for example:

1. Free inquiry and exchange of ideas
2. The right to present controversial material relevant to a course of instruction
3. Enjoyment of constitutionally protected freedom of expression

4. The right to be judged by one's colleagues in matters of promotion, tenure, and discipline, solely on the basis of the faculty member's professional qualifications and conduct, all in accordance with fair procedures and due process.
5. Participation in the governance of the university, including
 - a. approval of course content and manner of instruction
 - b. establishment of requirements for matriculation and degrees
 - c. appointment and promotion of faculty
 - d. selection of chairs, program directors, and certain academic administrators
 - e. discipline of faculty members, and the formulation of rules and procedures for discipline of students
 - f. establishment of norms for teaching responsibilities and for evaluation of both faculty and student achievement
 - g. determination of the norms of departmental governance
6. A safe and secure working environment

III. Faculty Code of Conduct

This listing of faculty responsibilities, ethical principles, and examples of unacceptable behavior is derived from American Association of University Professors Statement on Professional Ethics. It is organized around the individual faculty member's relation to teaching and students, to scholarship, to the university, to colleagues, and to the community. It identifies conduct that is not justified by ethical principles and significantly impairs the university's central functions. The examples given are examples of types of conduct that violate the preceding standards as given.

A. Teaching

“As teachers, professors encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students. They hold before them the best scholarly and ethical standards of their discipline. Professors demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors. Professors make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and to ensure that their evaluations of students reflect each student's true merit. They respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student. They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They acknowledge significant academic or scholarly assistance from them. They protect their academic freedom.”

(AAUP “Statement on Professional Ethics,” last revised in 2009)

Examples of Unacceptable Conduct

1. Failures to meet the responsibilities of instruction, including
 - a. arbitrary denial of access to instruction.
 - b. significant failure to adhere, without legitimate reason, to the rules of course conduct, including meeting class, keeping office hours, or holding examinations as scheduled.
 - c. significant deviation from course academic content.

- d. evaluation of student work by criteria not directly reflective of course performance.
- e. excessive and unexcused delay in evaluating student work.

2. Discrimination, including harassment, against students for political or personal reasons, including reasons of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, marital status, veteran or military status, disability, or genetic information. (See also BOG Policy 32 “Sexual Harassment, Sexual Discrimination, and Other Unlawful Conduct.”)

3. Use of position or powers of a faculty member to coerce a student’s judgment, or causing harm to a student, for arbitrary reasons.

4. Entering into a romantic or intimate relationship with any student when a direct power differential exists. (See also Section 6 of BOG Policy 32 on consensual relationships.)

B. Scholarship

“Professors, guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of the advancement of knowledge, recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them. Their primary responsibility to their subject is to seek and to state the truth as they see it. To this end professors devote their energies to developing and improving their scholarly competence. They accept the obligation to exercise critical self-discipline and judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge. They practice intellectual honesty. Although professors may follow subsidiary interests, these interests must never seriously hamper or compromise their freedom of inquiry.”

(AAUP “Statement on Professional Ethics,” last revised in 2009)

Examples of Unacceptable Conduct

- 1. Research misconduct. (See also Faculty Handbook Policy 211 “Research Integrity.”)
- 2. Intentional misappropriation of the writings, research, and findings of others.
- 3. Failing to take appropriate action to prevent or disclose conflicts of interest in research.

C. The University

“As members of an academic institution, professors seek above all to be effective teachers and scholars. Although professors observe the stated regulations of the institution, provided the regulations do not contravene academic freedom, they maintain their right to criticize and seek revision. Professors give due regard to their paramount responsibilities within their institution in determining the amount and character of work done outside it. When considering the interruption or termination of their service, professors recognize the effect of their decision upon the program of the institution and give due notice of their intentions.”

(AAUP “Statement on Professional Ethics,” last revised in 2009)

Examples of Unacceptable Conduct

1. Unauthorized use of university resources or facilities on a significant scale for personal, commercial, political, or religious purposes. (See also BOG Policy 48 on conflicts between personal interests and public responsibilities.)
2. Intentional significant disruption of functions or activities sponsored or authorized by the university. This includes forcible detention, threats of physical harm to, or harassment of another member of the university community that interferes with that person's performance of university activities.
3. Discrimination, including harassment, against university employees, for political or personal reasons, including reasons of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, marital status, veteran or military status, disability, or genetic information. (See also BOG Policy 32 "Sexual Harassment, Sexual Discrimination, and Other Unlawful Conduct.")

D. Colleagues

"As colleagues, professors have obligations that derive from common membership in the community of scholars. Professors do not discriminate against or harass colleagues. They respect and defend the free inquiry of associates, even when it leads to findings and conclusions that differ from their own. Professors acknowledge academic debt and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues. Professors accept their share of faculty responsibilities for the governance of their institution."

(AAUP "Statement on Professional Ethics," last revised in 2009)

Examples of Unacceptable Conduct

1. Making formal evaluations regarding the professional work of faculty based upon personal or political biases rather than professional judgments, or making them based upon incomplete evidence (e.g. hearsay, selective student comments, etc.).
2. Violate rules and conventions of confidentiality in personnel matters.
3. Discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, against faculty members based on actual or perceived membership in a Protected Category. "Protected Category" means a category under which an individual falls or is perceived to fall that is protected under federal, state, or local anti-discrimination laws, including race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, marital status, veteran or military status, disability, or genetic information. (See also BOG Policy 32 "Sexual Harassment, Sexual Discrimination, and Other Unlawful Conduct.")

E. The Community

"As members of their community, professors have the rights and obligations of other citizens. Professors measure the urgency of these obligations in the light of their responsibilities to their subject, to their students, to their profession, and to their institution. When they speak or act as private persons, they avoid creating the impression of speaking or acting for their college or university. As citizens engaged in a profession that depends upon

freedom for its health and integrity, professors have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom.” (AAUP “Statement on Professional Ethics,” last revised in 2009)

Examples of Unacceptable Conduct

1. Intentional misrepresentation of personal or private views as a position statement of the university or any of its agencies. An institutional affiliation, when appended to a faculty member’s name in a public statement or appearance, is permissible if used solely for purposes of identification.
2. Commission of a criminal act which has led to conviction in a court of law and which clearly demonstrates unfitness to continue as a member of the faculty. (See also BOG Policy 32, which applies to off-campus actions that affect a “substantial West Liberty interest.” These are defined to include criminal offenses as defined by federal and state law.)