

Administrative Policy



<i>Item</i>	<i>Details</i>
Policy Title:	Academic Freedom Policy
Policy Category:	Academic Policies Student Policies
Related Procedure(s)/ Guideline(s):	
Policy Owner:	Chief Academic Officer
Date Approved:	6/3/26
Review Dates:	
Revision Dates:	
Policy Scope:	<p>This policy applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time and part-time faculty • Adjunct and dual-credit/dual-enrollment faculty • Academic staff with instructional or assessment responsibilities • Students engaged in academic or training activities • Guest lecturers and community or industry partners involved in teaching and learning
Policy Statement:	<p>Southwest Wisconsin Technical College (Southwest Tech) recognizes the essential role of academic freedom dedicated to open access, student success, transfer preparation, and workforce development. Academic freedom ensures that faculty, staff, and students can pursue knowledge, engage in inquiry, and exchange ideas without undue restriction, consistent with professional standards and institutional responsibilities.</p> <p>Principles of Academic Freedom</p> <p>Freedom in Teaching Faculty have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach content consistent with approved curriculum, learning outcomes, accreditation requirements, and industry standards

- Select pedagogical methods and instructional materials appropriate to the discipline
- Encourage open, relevant, and respectful discussion as part of the learning process

Faculty are expected to:

- Present material accurately and within the scope of the course
- Support learners at all levels, including developmental, transfer, and workforce programs
- Maintain a learning environment that respects diverse perspectives and experiences

Authority over Student Success Measures

Consistent with federal compliance expectations for institutions of higher education:

- Faculty hold primary authority for assigning all measures of student success outcomes, including grades and other evaluative determinations of academic performance.

This authority includes:

- Determining the methods and criteria used to evaluate student work
- Assigning grades or performance measures based on academic judgment
- Upholding academic and disciplinary standards in assessing student learning

This requirement allows for collective responsibility, such as:

- Faculty committees with authority to modify grades through established appeal or review processes
- Departmental or institutional policies that outline shared academic governance in assessment matters

Freedom in Scholarship and Professional Activity

Faculty and staff may engage in:

- Scholarly, applied, creative, or industry-related professional work
- Publication or presentation of findings consistent with professional norms
- Partnerships with employers, community organizations, and educational institutions

All scholarly activity must align with ethical standards, legal requirements, and institutional research oversight.

	<p>Freedom of Expression Members of the academic community may express ideas in academic settings, professional forums, and college-sponsored activities, including those that may be controversial.</p> <p>This freedom does not extend to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harassment, discrimination, or abusive behavior• Disruption of college operations or learning environments• Presenting personal views as institutional positions without authorization <p>Respect for the College Mission Academic freedom is exercised in support of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student learning and equitable access• Workforce preparation and applied learning• Evidence-based instructional practices• Compliance with accreditation, licensure, and regulatory requirements <p>Professional Responsibility Academic freedom requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commitment to disciplinary and professional standards• Clear distinction between personal beliefs and curricular requirements• Fair, consistent, and transparent assessment practices• Respect for the rights and contributions of students and colleagues <p>Protection from Retaliation No faculty, staff member, or student may face retaliation for exercising academic freedom appropriately and in good faith. Concerns may be submitted through academic leadership, human resources, or formal grievance procedures.</p> <p>Limitations Academic freedom does not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Override approved curriculum or required course competencies• Exempt faculty from performance evaluation or institutional accountability• Justify deviation from professional or regulatory standards• Permit personal expression to replace required instructional content
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Academic freedom **supports**—but does not replace—the faculty’s federally recognized authority to assign grades and evaluate student learning.

Reporting Concerns

Individuals who believe their academic freedom has been compromised shall follow the college’s reporting procedure:

1. Employees should report the conduct to their supervisor or students should report the conduct to their faculty member; OR
2. The Chief Human Resources Officer/Equal Opportunity Officer, OR
3. Submit a report using the Report a Concern link on the college website.

Your complaint will be investigated promptly. The information you provide will be shared on a “need-to-know” basis.