DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Louisiana State University has long affirmed the fundamental role of academic freedom in the advancement of knowledge and in the performance of its mission as a teaching and research institution. This commitment to academic freedom was expressed in the 1997 and subsequent editions of the LSU Faculty Handbook in a statement that summarizes the fundamental role that academic freedom plays in the work of the university. That statement, which also appears in later editions of the Handbook, proclaims both the fundamental character of and the responsibilities pertaining to the exercise of academic freedom:

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

LSU is committed to the principle of academic freedom, and faculty are encouraged to explore fully their fields of interest. This principle also includes the right of a member of the academic staff to exercise the ordinary rights of an American citizen in speaking, writing, and action outside the University. At the same time, faculty are expected to be knowledgeable about laws and regulations that increasingly are affecting universities and to operate within the guidelines of University policy and regulations. Among the many implicit responsibilities of academic freedom is that of refraining from insistence that students or others accept any controversial point of view as authoritative. Academic freedom does not extend to any kind of abuse or infringement of the rights of others.

The growing complexity of both LSU itself and the contexts in which it carries out its mission have necessitated interpretation of and guidance concerning the application of this statement of commitment. The following paragraphs indicate how this policy should be implemented in the most common areas of academic life.

**PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE OF THE ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY AND TO WHOM THIS POLICY APPLIES**

Academic freedom is a cornerstone in the pursuit of answers to the many perplexing, sometimes controversial, questions that are asked, discussed, studied, and researched in an educational setting. The purpose of any policy on academic freedom is to clarify the conditions and parameters of that freedom. Broadly described, academic freedom allows faculty and other research professionals to express themselves through their research and to adopt pedagogy appropriate for their teaching goals.

**HOW THE ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY APPLIES TO RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS**

Faculty and other researchers affiliated with the university are free to engage in inquiry, research, and scholarship as they see fit as long as faculty and other researchers are performing adequately
in their other academic duties. In order to support the research and teaching curricula for the university, library faculty must be allowed the freedom to select and make available any materials for that support.

HOW THE ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY APPLIES TO INSTRUCTIONAL ROLES

Faculty are entitled to discuss all matters pertaining to their subject. However, faculty should avoid controversial matters that have no relation to their subject. All classroom discussion (face-to-face or online) must be conducted in a fair, non-abusive manner. Discussion must not infringe on the rights of others or be delivered in such a way as to coerce students to adopt the faculty member’s point-of-view as the only acceptable point-of-view.

HOW THE ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY APPLIES TO FACULTY AS MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY AND AS CITIZENS

In order to be fully engaged members of a university community and of society in general, faculty may express personal opinions; and these opinions need not always be in complete agreement with the positions of the university and its related institutions. In all instances of broadcasting a personal opinion, it is incumbent on the faculty member to clearly indicate that the opinion is personal and that he/she is not speaking as an institutional spokesperson.

CONCLUSION AND REFERENCES

Faculty are expected to be knowledgeable about laws and regulations that increasingly are affecting universities and to operate within the guidelines of university policy and regulations. The points made in the above policy on academic freedom do not supersede those guidelines. Rather, they work with them in order to provide an environment conducive to inquiring and learning in a respectful and collegial manner. These points also correspond to the “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, with 1970 Interpretive Comments” promulgated by the American Association of University Professors and the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities), available at http://www.aaup.org/aaup/pubsres/policydocs/contents/1940statement.htm