



Academic freedom is the liberty of university employees, students, and constituents to engage in research, scholarship, or other creative work to expand knowledge, to publish research findings, and to teach and learn in an atmosphere of unfettered free inquiry and discussion, without fear of censorship or retaliation. University of Western States provides, protects, and promotes an environment in which university employees, students, and constituents are afforded academic freedom in their educational pursuits.

Academic Freedom in Teaching and Learning

UWS employees and invited guests are afforded academic freedom in didactic, laboratory, and clinical settings. This includes freedom in teaching methodology and assessments in the classroom environment that are consistent with program requirements and freedom to present and discuss subject material, including divergent views and perspectives, backed by observation, experience, and/or research, or encouraging further research, that are intellectually within the content of the course. Academic freedom does not include introduction or discussion of controversial matters that have no relation to the course subject.

UWS employees, students, constituents, and guests are free to examine all pertinent data, to question received ideas, and to be guided by evidence, experience and personal observation. Alternative and opposing points of view are respected, and when appropriate, are incorporated in the synthesis of new approaches.

UWS employees, students, constituents and guests are encouraged to be curious, to analyze, question, and challenge subject matter information, and to engage in meaningful discussions. Facts, truths, clinical experience, and scientific evidence, and the methods used to derive them, are the primary concern, as opposed to the particular interests of institutional benefactors, individual practitioners, public opinion, and/or social, economic, political, and professional groups.

UWS faculty and staff, acting through departmental structures and appropriate administrative officials, have the initial responsibility to formulate and ensure an academically sound curriculum and course content. Ultimate responsibility for curriculum and course content resides with the provost/chief academic officer.

Academic Freedom in University-Related Matters

UWS employees and constituents must abide by university policies and perform to the best of their ability such reasonable duties as are assigned by university administration. Employees and constituents are free to speak and write respectfully and professionally on governance issues of their respective departments, and of the university as a whole, and on all matters related to their professional duties without administrative discipline or restraint.



Academic Freedom in Research and Publication

UWS employees are afforded full freedom to engage in research, scholarship, and creative work and to publish or produce the results, subject to responsible performance of these and other academic duties. Research conducted for the university must comply with university policies.

Academic Freedom in Public Expression

University employees are citizens, members of learned professions, and members of an educational institution. When a university employee speaks or writes as a citizen, including on social media, they are free from institutional censorship or discipline, and their special position as members of the university community imposes special obligations. The university employee is expected to keep in mind that members of the public may judge the profession and institution by the employee's utterances. The employee is expected to be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinions of others, and make every effort to indicate that they are not a spokesperson for the institution. This provision does not prohibit university employees, in their pursuit of community affairs, from identifying themselves and stating the position they hold at the university.

Related Policies:

Keywords: academic freedom, speech