

Intellectual Pluralism and Academic Freedom

The University System of Georgia and Valdosta State University subscribe to the statement below by the American Council on Education.

Statement on Academic Rights and Responsibilities American Council on Education

Intellectual pluralism and academic freedom are central principles of American higher education. Recently, these issues have captured the attention of the media, political leaders and those in the academy. This is not the first time in the nation's history that these issues have become public controversies, but the current interest in intellectual discourse on campus suggests that the meaning of these terms, and the rights and responsibilities of individual members of the campus community, should be reiterated.

Without question, academic freedom and intellectual pluralism are complex topics with multiple dimensions that affect both students and faculty. Moreover, America's colleges and universities vary enormously, making it impossible to create a single definition or set of standards that will work equally well for all fields of academic study and all institutions in all circumstances. Individual campuses must give meaning and definition to these concepts within the context of disciplinary standards and institutional mission.

The validity of academic ideas, theories, arguments and views should be measured against the intellectual standards of relevant academic and professional disciplines. Application of these intellectual standards does not mean that all ideas have equal merit. The responsibility to judge the merits of competing academic ideas rests with colleges and universities and is determined by reference to the standards of the academic profession as established by the community of scholars at each institution.

Intellectual freedom is essential for academic and intellectual excellence. Because colleges and universities have great discretion and autonomy over academic affairs, they have a particular obligation to ensure that academic freedom is protected for all members of the campus community and that academic

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instructor and given to the students in a course syllabus at the beginning of the semester. A student who believes grounds exist for an appeal of a final course grade must first consult informally with the instructor.

The grade appeal procedure is not to be used to review the judgment of an instructor in assessing the quality of a student's work. Possible grounds for an appeal are items such as the following:

- (a) An error in the calculation of the grade.
- (b) The assignment of a grade to a particular student by application of more exacting requirements than were applied to other students in the course.
- (c) The assignment of a grade to a particular student on some basis other than performance in the course.
- (d) The assignment of a grade by a departure from the instructor's previously announced standards.

Students who believe they have a case for a grade appeal must follow this process:

(1) Instructor: First discuss the appeal with the instructor responsible for the grade assigned. If the matter is not resolved, the appeal shall continue as follows:

- (3) Dean of the College or Director of Division** in which the course was taught.
- (4)** (for graduate courses) **Dean of the Graduate School**
- (5) Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.**

The instructor will require time to review the material before rendering a decision on the appeal. After the instructor has had the chance to review the appeal, the instructor and the student should meet to discuss it. If the appeal is not resolved at this level, the next level is the department head.