

**Faculty
Council of
Community
Colleges**

***Guide to Faculty Purview
Over Curricular
Decisions***



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The Faculty Council of Community Colleges seeks to educate our faculty about their rights and professional responsibilities as faculty members. Since 2014, we have been developing and approving several documents that assert the rights of college faculty to engage in curriculum development, instructional decisions and academic standards. This booklet is a compilation of these Faculty Council documents:

- Faculty Purview over the Curriculum
- Academic Standards Academic Freedom Position Statement
- Guidelines for Faculty Governance Inclusion in Education and Grant-Funded Initiatives
- Guidelines for Faculty Evaluation of Education and Grant- Funded Initiatives

We created this booklet because, in recent years, several trends have become potential challenges to the rights and responsibilities of faculty and their purview over the curriculum. These include the following:

- pedagogical techniques available for purchase,
- external forces regarding workforce employment needs,
- mandates regarding assessment and student completion,
- programs advertising new methods to maximize student access, opportunity and success,
- grant-funded programs impacting curriculum,
- increased availability of open educational resources, and
- curricula, course packages, and teaching techniques offered by non-profit and for-profit foundations or corporations.

These documents may be helpful to faculty and faculty governance on our campuses to establish and protect their roles when these initiatives are introduced by your colleagues, administration or even by SUNY. Examples of initiatives that have appeared on our campuses include: open educational resources; micro-credentials; competency-based learning; Quantway/Statway; and guided pathways. The Faculty Council recommends that decisions to adopt educational or grant-funded initiatives go through established shared governance processes prior to the administrative decision-making processes. Microcredentials, in particular, are getting a lot of attention on our campuses now. Existing SUNY policy expects academic consultation and shared governance procedures are used for non-credit courses and credentials that articulate to a credit-bearing course or credential.

If you have any questions about the enclosed resolutions, statement or guidelines, do not hesitate to contact the FCCC President or other Executive Committee members listed on the inside cover.

Nina Tamrowski
FCCC President

Faculty Purview over the Curriculum and Academic Standards

Whereas part 605.1 of State Education Law states, "Faculty shall participate in the formulation of the policy relating to ... curriculum and other study programs, and the granting of degrees...;" and

Whereas the AAUP 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* states, "faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter, and methods of instruction...and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process" and "faculty sets the requirements for the degrees offered..., determines when the requirements have been met and authorizes the president and board to grant the degrees thus achieved;" and

Whereas in a joint statement on shared governance, dated January 2015, the SUNY Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the SUNY University Faculty Senate, and the CUNY University Faculty Senate agreed that "faculty's disciplinary and teaching expertise are essential for determining the curriculum, developing appropriate pedagogical methods, and advancing knowledge," and that "[c]olleges and universities work best when faculty, individually and collectively, are responsible for exercising their academic judgment to determine who teaches, what is taught, to whom and how, and what performance standards are appropriate;" and

Whereas the SUNY/CUNY joint statement on shared governance further states that systems of shared governance are the most dependable and effective structures to support sustainable and innovative colleges and universities; and

Whereas frequent and far-reaching political efforts to mandate curricular changes within SUNY and CUNY (such as the initiations of the 1998 SUNY General Education Requirement, the CUNY Pathways Requirement, the SUNY seamless transfer mandate, and the recent proposals to require Quantway/Statway and applied learning experiences) threaten to undermine the academic integrity of higher education, in general, and impede faculty's ability to offer innovative programs of study within SUNY and CUNY, specifically;

BE IT RESOLVED,

That the Faculty Council of Community Colleges asserts that university and college faculties within SUNY and CUNY retain purview and primary responsibility for the curriculum and academic standards within their respective systems and on their campuses;

Be it further resolved that the Faculty Council of Community Colleges calls upon faculty to diligently exercise their purview and primary responsibility for curriculum and academic standards at their campuses and at the system level;

Be it further resolved, that the Faculty Council of Community Colleges reminds SUNY System Administration that the development and approval of curriculum and academic standards must be conducted through systematic, deliberative, transparent and consultative and established shared governance processes;

Be it further resolved that the Faculty Council of Community Colleges entreats New York's Executive, New York's Legislature, and SUNY and CUNY's Boards of Trustees to work through system- and campus-based shared governance processes when

considering recommendations for change to the curriculum programs and academic standards within SUNY and CUNY.

Position Statement on Academic Freedom

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), in the opening of their joint 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, state that colleges and universities exist for the common good, and that the common good “depends upon the free search for truth and its free expression.” Academic freedom is “essential to these purposes [.]”

Academic Freedom is a right of full-time and part-time faculty and staff that protects the following activities:

- providing constructive criticism on academic and institutional policies and procedures and the ability to recommend such policies and procedures to their respective institution of higher learning;
- teaching their classes using instructional resources (including but not limited to social media, videos, group discussion, debate, subject matter, etc.) and pedagogies that promote critical thinking and investigation into their respective disciplines;
- conducting academic research; and
- maintaining their authority to uphold academic standards and assign appropriate grades.

Important reasons for community college faculty and staff to include a statement involving Academic Freedom in their governance by-laws, employment contracts, and professional rights and responsibilities handbooks include the following:

- Faculty and staff are often required to serve on boards or committees of their colleges and in such capacity, they should be able to offer their opinions and recommendations about academic and institutional issues without fear of disciplinary action or censorship;
- Curriculum issues, program development, course development, and instruction are all areas where faculty are the experts and therefore need the ability to teach in ways that inspire critical thinking in their fields. Faculty have long been seen as the stewards of curriculum development, and faculty's involvement in communicating their field to students and the community is of prime importance.
- Since Academic Freedom applies to community college faculty who engage in research and creative expression, a clearly crafted statement on Academic Freedom serves both to protect and to educate faculty about their rights.
- Each community college is unique in its governance structure, employment contracts and means of communicating their expectations of faculty and staff; therefore, each campus is encouraged to make sure that academic freedom is defined and protected so that there is never a miscommunication of what academic freedom is or is not.

Guidelines for Faculty Governance Inclusion In Educational and Grant--Funded Initiatives

Curriculum development, course content and the teaching methods used in the classroom are the purview of the faculty. In its 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, the AAUP stated, "faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter, and methods of instruction."

In a joint statement dated January 2015, the SUNY Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the SUNY University Faculty Senate, and the CUNY University Faculty Senate agreed that "faculty's disciplinary and teaching expertise are essential for determining the curriculum, developing appropriate pedagogical methods, and advancing knowledge," and that "colleges and universities work best when faculty, individually and collectively, are responsible for exercising their academic judgment to determine who teaches, what is taught, to whom and how, and what performance standards are appropriate."

In recent years, several trends have become potential threats to the rights and responsibilities of faculty.

These include the following:

- pedagogical techniques available for purchase,
- external forces regarding workforce employment needs,
- mandates regarding assessment and student completion,
- programs advertising new methods to maximize student access, opportunity and success,
- grant---funded programs impacting curriculum
- increased availability of open educational resources, and

- curricula, course packages, and teaching techniques offered by non-profit and for-profit foundations or corporations.

External directives (such as Seamless Transfer) have created pressure to reduce the number of credit hours and the courses within academic programs, impacting content, academic standards and degree requirements. At the same time, grant-funded initiatives have increasingly become a means of fostering innovation; however, when funding is found, financial motivations, rather than faculty expertise and academic soundness, may drive decisions.

In addressing these trends, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges reaffirms its core principles of academic excellence, academic freedom, and sound shared governance practices. Therefore, when colleges are considering the adoption of new educational initiatives or developing proposals for grant-funded programs impacting curriculum, the Faculty Council strongly recommends the following guidelines to protect faculty purview over curriculum, academic integrity, and participation in shared governance.

I. Faculty purview over the curriculum:

Whenever new teaching technologies, pedagogies, techniques, programs, products, or delivery systems are under consideration:

- a. The faculty directly involved in teaching the courses in question must determine the need before considering grant funding, adoption, donation or purchase.
- b. The faculty directly involved in teaching the courses in question must be included in all discussions regarding the impact on curriculum.

- c. The faculty directly involved in teaching the courses in question must approve purchases or adoptions.
- d. Faculty are solely responsible for developing the content of all courses, both credit and non-credit, when those courses lead to a state-approved educational credential.
- e. All new courses and programs must be developed within established shared governance processes requiring the approval of faculty.

II. Established curriculum approval processes are an essential part of shared governance:

Whenever new teaching technologies, pedagogies, techniques, programs, products, delivery systems or degree requirements are under consideration:

- a. The development and approval of such must be conducted through systematic, deliberative, transparent and consultative shared governance processes.
- b. When colleges consider grants or donations related to these curricular matters, faculty directly involved in teaching the courses in question must be involved in every stage of the funding request process.
- c. When funding is an issue for competing educational initiatives at a college, an open, fair, transparent and collaborative process for prioritization established through shared governance must be used.
- d. The faculty directly involved in teaching the courses in question must determine when new teaching technologies, pedagogies, techniques, products, or delivery systems impact course content or are appropriate to their students.

- e. When such changes or innovations impact content, such changes must be approved by faculty through established curriculum approval processes.
- f. In order to facilitate time-sensitive initiatives, shared governance systems should consider establishing fast-tracking curricular approval procedures.

Guidelines for Faculty Evaluation of Educational and Grant-Funded Initiatives

The recent *Faculty Council of Community Colleges Guidelines for Faculty Governance Inclusion in Educational and Grant-Funded Initiatives* re-affirms that “Curriculum development, course content and the teaching methods used in the classroom are the purview of the faculty.” In addition, this document states that “faculty’s disciplinary and teaching expertise are essential for determining the curriculum, developing appropriate pedagogical methods, and advancing knowledge,” and that ‘colleges and universities work best when faculty, individually and collectively, are responsible for exercising their academic judgment to determine who teaches, what is taught, to whom and how, and what performance standards are appropriate.”

The purpose of this document is to help guide faculty as they evaluate and consider adopting new teaching technologies, pedagogies, techniques, programs, products, or delivery systems (herein after referred to as *instructional materials*).

Student learning and success can be defined in many different ways. For some disciplines the emphasis is placed on skill development while other areas of study place a greater focus on conceptual understanding and analysis. Students may be judged by how they can interweave the concepts of one discipline with another or how a student performs in subsequent courses within a discipline. In recent years, the determination of student success has been also defined by the timely completion of an academic credential.

There have always been “Ready to Use” instructional materials created by both commercial and nonprofit organizations that offer curricula to potentially deepen

student learning and improve student success. It is the role of the faculty to determine whether these programs are appropriate for their particular institution.

It is therefore imperative that before new instructional materials are adopted faculty analyze the products with respect to the needs of their own institution, program, and courses.

When evaluating the need for new instructional materials, consider asking the following questions:

- How do you define student success and learning?
- What are the problems you are trying to solve?
- What is currently lacking in your present curriculum?
- Is there a sustainable population of students on your campus who warrant this change?
- What is the cost to the student?

While reviewing new instructional materials, consider the following questions:

Institutional Planning and Resource Allocation

- Does your campus have adequate and sustainable human, fiscal and physical plant resources to support the change?
- Do the instructional materials include training and follow up support?

Student Success

- Will this change in instructional materials better prepare your students for future study in the discipline or careers?
- Do these instructional materials address the needs of your students? Department? Campus?

- Will these instructional materials improve student success?

Instructional Design

- Is the content in the program or product comprehensive, accurate, and current?
- Does the content in the instructional materials contain both depth and breadth of the discipline?
- Does the content in the instructional materials thoroughly cover concepts?
- Do the instructional materials contain lesson plans designed to include effective concept introduction, practice, summary, and assessment of key concepts?
- Are the instructional materials appealing and easy to use for both faculty and students?
- Is there credible research to support the effectiveness of the instructional materials?
- Is the philosophy of the instructional materials clearly articulated and grounded in credible research and consistent throughout?
- Are there faculty in your department who embrace this philosophy? Does the philosophy of the instructional materials align with the philosophy of your department? Campus?
- Do the instructional materials employ effective, innovative, and engaging teaching methods that are supported by data?
- Are concepts in the instructional materials developed in a way that is supported by research?

Assessment

- Do the instructional materials contain student learning outcomes that are clearly articulated? Does each lesson contain student learning outcomes? Do the lessons and activities support these learning outcomes? Do the

assessment activities assess these learning outcomes?

Once the faculty determines that a new teaching technology, pedagogy, technique, program, product, or delivery system should be adopted, it is imperative that the development and approval be conducted through systematic, deliberative, transparent and consultative shared governance processes.



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