

POSITION STATEMENT ON
ACADEMIC VALUES, RIGHTS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

University of Denver Faculty Senate
Approved 13 February 2004

CONTEXT

Colorado's colleges and universities are currently in the eye of a national storm concerning the state of academic freedom on American campuses. Faculties have been accused of harboring a pervasive liberal political bias, discriminating against conservative viewpoints in the classroom, and using their power to indoctrinate, rather than educate, students. Efforts are afoot in the Colorado state legislature and by private organizations to watchdog the behavior of professors within our institutions of higher learning. This has serious implications for academic freedom on both sides of the teacher-student relationship, and for the university as a site of critical, creative, and ethical inquiry.

The University of Denver—the oldest private university in the Rocky Mountain West—values and promotes independent thought, critical and creative inquiry, ethical behavior, and an education that serves the public good. Accordingly, the Faculty of the University of Denver reaffirm their longstanding commitment to:

- (1) defending the principles of academic freedom, open debate, and civil discourse;
- (2) exposing students to the full range of paradigms, theories, and methods at play in a field of inquiry;
- (3) learning from the accumulated body of human wisdom, which has established that:
 - (a) knowledge is provisional and open to reinterpretation;
 - (b) the university—an institution that is part of and interactive with wider political, economic, and cultural forces—is a repository of knowledge, site of critical inquiry, and agent of social change;
 - (c) critical, creative, and ethical inquiry is best served when teachers and students are free to express and examine the societal commitments and biases that influence the production, dissemination, and application of knowledge.
- (4) respecting the ability of students and teachers to jointly contextualize, critique, and compare different approaches and contributions to human knowledge;
- (5) evaluating students solely on the basis of their academic performance, and our peers solely on the basis of their contributions to scholarly and creative activity, teaching, university service, and the wider public good;
- (6) and, finally, inspiring and communicating the joy and excitement of intellectual endeavors.