BP 4030 ACADEMIC FREEDOM

References:
Title 5 Section 51023;
ACCJC Accreditation Eligibility Requirement 20 and
ACCJC Accreditation Standard I.C.7

Preface
The West Valley-Mission Community College District supports the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, both the rights and duties specified therein.

The West Valley-Mission Community College District recognizes that democratic participation, positive social change, and moral education, as well as scientific and technological advancement, all require the free exchange of ideas and information. Therefore, the District is committed to the free expression of diverse viewpoints on the part of faculty and students, as well as encouraging critical examination of these various perspectives. The District is also committed to the conduct of research and observation of the natural world unimpeded by social, religious, political, or theoretical biases and prejudices.

Introduction: Definition and Philosophy
Academic freedom is the right of faculty members to interpret scholarly findings and communicate conclusions without being subject to harassment when those conclusions are at variance with popularly held beliefs or opinions. Faculty members have a corresponding obligation to study, present, interpret, and discuss facts and ideas concerning their fields of knowledge in a responsible manner. The faculty member will acknowledge the facts on which controversial views are based and show respect for reasonable opinions held by others.

Institutions of higher education operate not to further the interest of either the individual faculty member or the institution as a whole but rather for the common good. In a democratic society the common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition. Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth while academic freedom in teaching is essential both to the uninhibited expression of scholarly findings and to ensuring the fullest student engagement with ideas.

The West Valley-Mission Community College District therefore asserts unequivocally that academic freedom is a right possessed by all faculty members and recognizes that
academic and intellectual freedom is best protected by a system of tenure, academic
due process, and policies and procedures that provide faculty with the opportunity to
freely express themselves in any on or off campus venue. In addition, the District
asserts that the common good obligates the District community to defend academic
freedom in society as a whole.

Rights of Academic Employees
The West Valley-Mission Community College District is committed to maintaining the
following rights of all faculty members:

- Faculty can engage in intellectual debate without fear of censorship or retaliation.

- Faculty are entitled to full freedom in their use of books, online sources, internet
  sites, classroom speakers, and all forms of information dissemination. Publication of the
  results of any research that may result from the use of these resources is protected under academic freedom.

- Faculty have the right to study and do research on the topics they choose and to
draw what conclusions they find consistent with their research.

- As citizens, members of learned professions, and members of the institution,
faculty have the right to support or oppose political causes, issues, and parties
outside of normal classroom activities and should be free from institutional
censorship or discipline, provided they clearly indicate they are not representing
the institution.

Academic Freedom and Responsibility
West Valley-Mission Community College District faculty members have these further
and related responsibilities:

- To maintain themselves as experts in their fields of competency by study, research, and, where appropriate, publication.

- To diffuse knowledge and, if possible, to encourage creativity by their teaching.

- To defend their colleagues and their institution against any threats to academic
  freedom whether from within or without the West Valley-Mission Community
  College District.

Professional Ethics
Academic freedom requires that all faculty members establish and preserve an open
learning environment at the college. No special limitations shall be placed upon
students in their study, investigation, presentation, and interpretation of facts and ideas
concerning human society, the physical and biological world, and other branches of
learning, subject to accepted standards of academic responsibility. Students shall have
the opportunity to study controversial issues and divergent views and to arrive at their own conclusions—even if they differ from those of the instructor.

As colleagues, faculty members have obligations that derive from common membership in the community of scholars. They respect and defend the free inquiry of associates. In the exchange of criticism and ideas, faculty members show due respect for the opinions of others. They strive to be objective in their professional evaluation of colleagues, and accept their share of faculty responsibilities for the governance of their institution.

As members of an academic institution, faculty members seek above all to be effective teachers and scholars. Although faculty members observe the state regulations of the institution, provided the regulations do not contravene academic freedom, they maintain their right to criticize and seek revision.

As citizens engaged in a profession that depends upon freedom for its health and integrity, faculty have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom.