

Academic Freedom

Policy Number: AC 100

Responsibility:

The best education can be attained where intellectual growth takes place within an environment of Christian faith and commitment. The creation of such an environment is the goal of Seventh-day Adventist higher education, in which spiritually-oriented concepts are central to the aims of education.

In a faith-based college such as Kettering College, as in any institution of higher learning in the western world, the principle of academic freedom has been central to establishing such aims. This principle reflects the belief in freedom as an essential right in a democratic society, but particularly in an academic community. It is the guarantee that teachers and students will be able to carry on the functions of learning, research, and teaching with a minimum of restrictions. It applies to subjects within the teacher's professional expertise, where there is a special need for freedom to pursue truth. Moreover, it applies to the atmosphere of open inquiry necessary in any academic community where learning is to be honest and thorough.

For a faith-based college, academic freedom has an additional significance. It is not less important, but more important than in the secular institution, for that freedom is essential to the well-being of the church to which it is connected. This places a responsibility of Christian teachers to be self-disciplined, responsible, and mature scholars who have concern for the spiritual and intellectual needs of their students.

Kettering College, therefore, subscribes to principles of academic freedom generally held important in American higher education. The following principles of such freedom are stated within the context of accountability, with special attention to parameters made necessary by the religious aims of a Christian institution:

Freedom of Speech. As citizens, teachers are guaranteed the constitutional freedom to speak and to write responsibly, free from unwarranted limitation.

As members of a learned profession, they must recognize that the public will to some degree judge their profession by their utterances and example. Therefore, they will be accurate, respectful of the opinions of others, honest, willing to differentiate between evidence and conclusions, prepared to re-examine conclusions, and open to new evidence. The greatest infringement of academic responsibility is misrepresentation, either by intent or by employing poor, unorthodox investigative procedures.

In addition to the above, other examples of failure to exercise academic responsibility on the part of faculty include:

- Academic or professional conduct that brings discredit to the institution, to an academic discipline, or to an individual in a manner that is illegal or unethical.
- Using position and authority to persuade, rather than to present credible and convincing evidence.

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