

Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities

(Senate: 1/23/68, 11/9/71, 7/15/75, 5/10/77, 11/26/85, 2/18/97, 6/2/15; President: 3/26/68, 11/18/71, 12/31/75,* 6/30/77, 12/20/85, 6/6/97, 10/13/15; Editorial Amendment: 9/00)

*Should any provision of this approved Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities be deemed contrary to procedural regulations under Title IX or any other regulation of the federal government, such provisions will be null and void until properly amended. The voiding of any one section shall not invalidate any other section.

Preamble

Existing for the pursuit of knowledge, academic institutions should encourage students to enlarge their capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. In this respect, free inquiry and free expression are essential when appropriate to the mode of instruction.

Scholars have rights and responsibilities deriving from their highest standards. As members of this community, students have the duty of exercising and cherishing the freedom to learn. Therefore, appropriate opportunities in the classroom, on the campus, and in the larger community should prevail for such a purpose. This document enumerates some conditions conducive to freedom of learning. Students should exercise their rights with maturity and responsibility.

The advancement of higher learning should be the obligation of all members of the academic community. The University has a duty to develop policies and procedures which safeguard academic freedom. In consonance with this social process, the student's rights and privileges as citizens or residents of the United States shall not be abridged.

1. Academic Advisement.

Students have the responsibility to seek advisement throughout their enrollment at this University. To meet this responsibility, they have the right to reasonable access to professional advisement relative to all segments of their academic programs and to their career goals related to those academic programs. From academic major advisors, students should expect advisement relative to the appropriate selection of major and support courses and of General Education courses related to their goals and interests, and on matters relating to most university, and all college and department regulations and procedures. From other appropriate university offices, students should expect advice on matters relating to state and university regulations and procedures. Students have the responsibility to consult the requisite catalogs, schedules, and handbooks for rules and regulations concerning their major and support courses.

2. In the Classroom.

When appropriate to the mode of instruction in the classroom as well as in conference and advisement, the professor should encourage open inquiry and free expression. Students shall not be evaluated solely on the basis of their academic performance, not on their opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic performance.

a. **Freedom of Expression.** Students are responsible for mastery of the content of any course in which they enroll, but they are free to take reasoned exception at appropriate times to the interpretation of data or opinions offered.

b. **Academic Evaluation.** Students are responsible for meeting standards of academic performance established by their professors. Evaluations based on standards other than academic performance in the course being offered shall be considered arbitrary or capricious. The measurement of a student's performance is the responsibility of the professor. The assignment of a final grade is the responsibility solely of the professor.

c. **Instructional Practice.** Students have the right to substantial instruction in the course content at the time scheduled for class meetings except in mitigating circumstances.

d. **Writing and Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is a direct violation of intellectual and academic honesty. While it exists in many forms, all plagiarisms refer to the same act: representing somebody else's words or ideas as one's own. The most extreme forms of plagiarism are a paper written by another person, a paper obtained from a commercial source, or a paper made up of passages copied word for word without acknowledgement. But paraphrasing authors' ideas or quoting even limited portions of their texts without proper citation is also an act of plagiarism. Even putting someone else's ideas into one's own words without acknowledgement may be plagiarism. In any of its forms, plagiarism cannot be tolerated in an academic community. It may constitute grounds for a failing grade, probation, suspension, or expulsion.

One distinctive mark of an educated person is the ability to use language correctly and effectively to express ideas. Faculty assign written work for the purpose of helping students achieve that mark. Each professor will outline specific desiderata, but all expect every student to present work that represents the student's understanding of the subject in the student's own words. It is seldom expected that student papers will be based entirely or even primarily on original ideas or original research. Therefore, to incorporate the concepts of others may be appropriate with proper acknowledgement of the sources; and to quote others directly by means of quotation marks and acknowledgments is proper. However, if a paper consists entirely of quotations and citations, the paper should be rewritten to show the student's own understanding and expressive ability. The purpose of the written assignment (i.e. development of communication and analytic skills) should be kept in mind as each paper is prepared. It should not be evaded through plagiarism.

3. Student Official Records and Information.

a. **Separation of Records and Information.** To minimize the risk of disclosure to unauthorized persons, discipline, counseling, medical, and activities records shall be kept separately from the official university academic records. Transcripts of academic records shall contain only information about academic status, except that student participation in academic governance may also be recorded pursuant to policies adopted by the University. However, disciplinary actions taken against a student which affect eligibility to register may be recorded for as long as authorized by special action of the President or designee, pursuant to the Student Disciplinary Procedures of The California State University.

b. **University Access to Records and Information.** Information from disciplinary, counseling, academic, medical, or activities files shall be available only to authorized persons within the University who require such records in the normal course of performing the assigned duties of their position.

c. **Extra-Institutional Access to Records and Information.** Students have a right to expect that their records will not be subject to unauthorized disclosure or access. Student records shall not be available to any extra-institutional person, agency, or organization except as permitted under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 20, U.S.C. 1232 [G]). Custodians of student records should be aware that the law prohibits release of most student information without prior consent, except within the University or state or Federal agencies, and only when the persons receiving the information have a "legitimate educational interest."

Students should be aware that there are circumstances under which "directory information" can be released to extra-institutional parties unless a student specifically prohibits it by filing a form with the Registrar's office. (The University shall ensure that the students are notified of their right to file such a form.) Directory information as defined by FERPA includes the student's name, address, telephone listing, electronic mail address, photograph, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, grade level, enrollment status, degrees and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student. All requests for release of student "directory information" to extra-institutional parties shall be reviewed by the campus information officer and a determination rendered as to whether it meets FERPA requirements.

The University shall make a good faith effort to notify a student in writing upon receipt of a subpoena of student records and information, the judicial authority requesting the records, the specific records requested, and the action taken by the University.

d. **Student Access to Records and Information.** Unless their right to access has previously been waived on a form provided for that purpose* currently enrolled and former students of California State University, Los Angeles shall have under both the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and state law the right to know about existing student record systems and to examine their own records, including letters of recommendation, by following procedures that are established by the office responsible for keeping records. Persons making recommendations have a right to know in writing whether access rights have been waived. Students may challenge the record's accuracy or the appropriateness of its retention. In addition, students shall have the right to include in their individual records any additional information or responses bearing on information they find objectionable. Students must furnish copies of such additional information to the individuals, departments, or administrative officers who originate the information found objectionable.**

e. **Confidentiality of Acquired Information.** All University personnel shall respect confidential information about students which they acquire in the course of their work.

f. **Political Files.** No records or files shall be kept reflecting the political beliefs or political activities of students.

g. **Disciplinary Files.** Any person or entity holding disciplinary records shall destroy disciplinary files five years after the expiration of disciplinary action or immediately after the decision that there shall be no disciplinary action.

h. **Copies of Student Records.** A student may receive a copy of a record which the student has requested or consented to be released. Students must pay a charge for copies of records for which such a charge has been established.

i. **Right of the Student to File a Complaint with the Department of Education.** The Department of Education has established an office and review board to investigate complaints and adjudicate violations. The designated office is: The Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4605.

*Students have access to only those letters of recommendation written after January 1, 1975, unless the author of the earlier letters consents to the ending of confidentiality.

**Students shall not have access to investigative information unless such information is directly relevant to the evidence used in formal disciplinary hearings.

4. **Freedom of Information.**

a. The student shall have the right to reasonable access to university, college, and department policies, procedures, standards, and regulations which affect the right of a student to enroll, remain enrolled, or withdraw from any course or program of study.

b. The University's General Catalog shall be the principal means by which such academic information as enumerated above shall be transmitted to students.

c. The University, colleges, departments, and interdisciplinary groups shall not initiate and implement, procedures, standards, and regulations which affect the right of a student to enroll, remain enrolled, or withdraw from any course or program of study except through established university procedures.

d. Students shall have the right to information from each professor at the first class session as to the general requirements and goals of a course in which they are enrolled, and the general criteria upon which they will be evaluated in that course. Such information must be made available in the form of a written syllabus by the second meeting, and preferably at the first class session. A copy of the syllabus shall be available for review in the department office. The syllabus shall include but not be limited to the following:

- 1) General course description including course prerequisites, if any.
- 2) Course objectives.
- 3) Topical outline of course.
- 4) Requirements - policies and procedures (e.g., attendance, assignments, readings), and basis for evaluation (e.g., written work, examinations or quizzes, term papers, portfolios, projects, laboratory or field work assignments, etc.).
- 5) Grading system and its relation to achievement of the requirements in 4).
- 6) Date and time of final examination.
- 7) Instructor's campus location, telephone extension and office hours.

e. Just as it is the students' right to know the policies, procedures, standards, and regulations which affect their rights, so shall it be their responsibility to obtain and act appropriately on such information, and their ignorance of such information which has been made accessible to them shall not be cause to waive such policies, procedures, standards, and regulations.

5. Student Affairs.

a. Freedom of Access to Higher Education. The University will make clear the characteristics and academic performance of students which it considers relevant to success in the institution's program. Under no circumstances should a student be barred from admission to a particular institution on the basis of race, religion, or sex. Thus, within the limits of its facilities, the University shall be open to all students who are qualified according to its admission standards.

The facilities and services of the University shall be open to all of its enrolled students, and the institution shall use its influence to secure equal access for all students to public facilities in the local community.

b. Freedom of Association. Students bring to the campus a variety of interests previously acquired, and develop many new interests as members of the academic community. They shall be free to organize and join associations to promote their common interests.

- 1) Affiliation with an extra-mural organization shall not disqualify a student organization from institutional recognition. At the same time, all actions of a student organization shall be determined by vote of only those persons given voting privileges in that organization and who also hold bona fide membership in the university community. These university organizations may not represent themselves as expressing official policy or practice of the University.
- 2) Each officially recognized student organization must have a university advisor who is either a faculty member or professional staff member. Cal State L.A. may permit part-time faculty and professional staff to serve as advisors. Advisors should not be selected from auxiliary organizations. Each organization shall be free to choose its own advisor. Members of the faculty and professional staff perform an important educational role and serve the university community when they accept the responsibility to advise and consult with student organizations. They shall guide organizations in the exercise of responsibility, but they do not have the authority to control the policy of organizations.
- 3) Cal State L.A. shall comply with all student organization filing requirements described in California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Article 4, nondiscrimination in student organizations, sections 41500 (Withholding of Recognition), 41501 (Definition of Recognition), 41503 (Filing Requisites), and 41504 (Penalties). These sections require each student organization to deposit with the Vice President of Student Affairs or his/her designee copies of all constitutions, charters, or other documents relating to its policies. Documents shall be refiled within 90 days after any substantive change or amendment.
- 4) Cal State L.A. shall not recognize any fraternity, sorority, living group, honor society, or other student organization that discriminates on the basis of race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, color, age, gender, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or disability. The prohibition on membership policies that discriminate on the basis of gender does not apply to social fraternities or sororities or other university living groups. Such groups, however, must respect the self-determination of students with regard to their gender identities. Student organizations shall deliver

to the Vice President for Student Affairs or his/her designee a statement signed by the President or similar officer of the local student organization attesting that the organization has no rules or policies that discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, color, age, gender, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or disability. This statement shall be renewed annually.

Cal State L.A. shall not recognize any fraternity, sorority, living group, honor society, or other student organization unless its membership and leadership are open to all currently enrolled students, except that a social fraternity or sorority or other university living group may impose a gender limitation as permitted by Title 5, California Code of Regulations, section 41500. Student organizations may require applicants for leadership positions to have been members for a specified period of time, and may require officers to compete for those positions in elections of the membership. Honor societies may require applicants to meet additional criteria.

- 5) Students and student organizations are free to examine and to discuss all questions of interest to them, and to express opinions publicly or privately. They are also free to support causes by any means which do not disrupt the regular and essential operation of the institution. At the same time, they must make clear to the academic larger community that in their public expressions or demonstrations, students or student organizations speak only for themselves.
- 6) Students are allowed to invite and to hear any person of their own choosing, providing the invitation is in consonance with university policy on visiting speakers. The institutional control of campus facilities will not be used a device of censorship. Sponsorship of guest speakers does not necessarily imply approval or endorsement of the views express, either by the sponsoring group or the institution.

c. Student Participation in Institutional Government. As members of the academic community, students shall be free, individually and collectively, to express their views on issues of institutional policy and on matters of general interest to the student body.** The role and character of student government shall be reviewed and modified only through prescribed procedures.

d. Student Publications and Broadcasting. Student publications and the student press are valuable aids in establishing and maintaining an atmosphere of free and responsible discussion and intellectual exploration on the campus. They are a means of bringing student concerns to the attention of the faculty and the institutional authorities, and of formulating student opinion on various issues on the campus and in the world at large. They also represent the institution to the public. The Communications Code states university policies on these matters. To this end, the editorial freedom of student editors and managers entails corollary responsibilities to be governed by the canons of responsible journalism, where libel, indecency, undocumented allegations,

attacks on personal integrity, and the techniques of harassment and innuendo are especially inappropriate.

Particular questions with respect to a student's rights and responsibilities should be directed to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

*Title 5, California Administrative Code, section 41503, requires student organization to submit a constitution.

**The student body and its official governing arm, the Associated Students, Inc., have a clearly defined role in the expressing the wishes of the student body and in determining institutional policy (See ASBOD Minutes of October 13, 1966, items 4.11-4.13, and the Faculty Constitution, Appendix B).