

Code of Faculty Ethics for the Faculty of Western Washington University (1993)

Preface

Membership in the academic community and in the faculty of Western Washington University imposes upon faculty a range of obligations beyond that currently accepted by the members of the wider society. These obligations, which ensue from the faculty member's commitment to learning and to the role of teacher, including obligations to respect the dignity of others; to acknowledge the right of others to express differing opinions; to foster learning; to defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry, learning and teaching; and to support freedom of expression on and off the campus. An obligation to protest injustices and seek correction of inequities carries with it the corollary responsibility to do so in ways which do not intentionally, persistently, or significantly impede the functions of the institution.

A professional faculty, as guardian of academic values, serves as the instrument of disciplinary action against unjustified assaults upon those values by its own members. The traditional faculty role of limiting participation in disciplinary action to assurance of academic due process is inadequate to protect the conditions enumerated in the 1940 AAUP Statement on Academic Freedom. This function must be preserved but must also be strengthened by faculty assumption of responsibilities in adopting, practicing and promoting adherence to those principles of conduct essential to academic endeavor.

In recognition of this responsibility, the faculty of Western Washington University have adopted this Code of Ethics as a guide for present and future members of the University faculty.

Section 1

Western faculty members, guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of their role in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge, recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them as scholars. Their primary responsibility to their respective subjects is to seek and to state the

truth as they, in consequence of their academic competence, perceive it. To this end faculty energies are devoted to developing and improving their scholarly competence. They accept the obligation to exercise self-discipline and judgment in using, extending and transmitting knowledge. They practice intellectual honesty. When subsidiary interests are followed, they must insure that these interests do not seriously compromise freedom of inquiry nor the fulfillment of academic responsibilities.

Section 2

As teachers, the Western faculty encourage the free pursuit of learning by students, and demonstrate by example the best scholarly standards of their respective disciplines. The faculty respect students as individuals and adhere to their designated role as intellectual guides and counselors, make every effort to foster honest academic conduct and to assure that evaluations of students reflect their actual performance. The faculty avoid and condemn sexual harassment, intimidation, and the exploitation of students. The confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student is respected, and any exploitation of students for private advantage is avoided by the faculty member who acknowledges significant assistance from them. Faculty strive to help students develop high standards of academic competency and respect for academic freedom.

Section 3

A teacher's mastery of his/her subject and scholarship entitles the teacher to a classroom and to freedom in the presentation of a subject. Faculty thus avoid injecting into classes material which has no relation to the subject and conscientiously develop the content of a course as announced to students and as approved by the faculty in their collective responsibility for the curriculum.

Section 4

As a colleague, the Western faculty member has special obligations that derive from membership in the community of scholars. These include respect for, and defense of, the free inquiry of associates and, in the exchange of criticism and ideas, the respect for the opinions of others. Faculty members acknowledge the contributions of their colleagues and strive to be fair in their professional judgment of colleagues. Each accepts his/her share of faculty responsibilities for the governance of this institution.

Section 5

As a member of this institution, each Western faculty member seeks above all to be an effective teacher and scholar. Although all regulations of the institution that do not contravene academic freedom are observed by the faculty, the right to criticize the institution is determined by the faculty member with due regard to the paramount responsibilities within it. When considering the interruption or termination of service, the faculty member recognizes the effect of such decisions upon the program of the institution and gives due notice of such intentions.

Section 6

As a member of a larger community, the Western faculty member maintains the same rights and obligations as does any other citizen. The urgency of these obligations is measured in the light of responsibilities to the discipline, to the students, to the profession, and to the institution. When speaking or acting as a private individual, each faculty member avoids creating the impression of speaking or acting for the University. As a citizen engaged in a profession that depends upon freedom for its integrity and welfare, the Western faculty member exercises a special obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom.

Section 7

Academic Freedom has traditionally included the instructor's full freedom as a citizen. Most faculty members face no insoluble conflicts between the claims of conscience and of social and political action, on the one hand, and the claims and expectations of students, colleagues and the institution on the other. If such conflicts become acute, and the instructor's attention to obligations as a concerned citizen precludes the fulfillment of academic obligations, he/she should either request a leave of absence or resign his/her academic position.

Relationships of a romantic or sexual nature between a faculty member and a student under that faculty member's supervision always endanger the faculty member's decision-making abilities and the student's need for a non-intimidating learning environment. Even if both parties in such a relationship are capable of separating their personal and professional relationships from one another, the faculty member cannot exhibit the professionalism that is expected of him/her.

Consequently, a faculty member is obliged to disengage himself/herself from a supervisory role over any student with whom he/she has established or seeks to establish a romantic or sexual relationship. No faculty member at Western Washington University will evaluate, grade, or supervise a student with whom the faculty member is romantically or sexually involved.

Section 8

The expression of dissent and the attempt to produce change on campus and in the larger society are legitimate, but they must be carried out in ways which do not violate academic freedom, injure individuals, disrupt the classes of colleagues, intrude on the individual rights of others, or damage institutional facilities or private or public property. All members of the academic community and visitors to the University must be assured of the right to be heard in an atmosphere of free inquiry and in a situation devoid of violence.

Section 9

It is presumed that members of the Western faculty will find this Code of Ethics an adequate guide for the choices they must make in the fulfillment of their academic functions. If rules are needed to implement the principles inherent in this Code, they shall be developed by the faculty within the spirit of the Code, shall be in accordance with the 1940 AAUP Statement on Academic Freedom, and shall carry full provision for due process.

[Adopted by the Faculty Senate 5/3/93 and faculty referendum 5/14/93; approved by the Board of Trustees 7/8/93]