

A Resolution

Faculty Council

Academic Freedom to Teach on Issues of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Religion, and Political Philosophy

WHEREAS, the University of Colorado Board of Regents is considering a resolution focused on scholarly discussion and academically-related training and policy at the University of Colorado on issues of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and political philosophy that may make an individual “feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race, ethnicity, or gender.”

WHEREAS, the proposed board resolution is part of a larger movement of state legislative and university board proposals being introduced and enacted across the United States that address academic processes and discussions related to racism, casteism, sexism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities.

WHEREAS, Article V of the Faculty Senate Constitution states that the “college or school faculty shall have the principal role in the origination of academic policy and standards...”

WHEREAS, Article 5.B.2 of Regent Law defines Academic Freedom as “the freedom to inquire, discover, access, publish, disseminate, and teach truth and facts as the individual understands it, subject to no control or authority save the control and authority of the rational methods by which knowledge is established in the field.”

WHEREAS, Policy 5.B.1 of Regent Policy states that faculty “shall not be subjected to direct or indirect pressures in an attempt to influence their work in a manner that would conflict with professional standards of the field. The Board of Regents and administration shall not impose such pressures or influence and shall resist such pressures or interference when exerted from outside the university.”

WHEREAS, educating on and whenever possible, addressing through academic policy and process, the ways in which systemic barriers based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and political philosophy have shaped history and continue to impact the world are central to producing engaged and informed citizens in a multicultural, multiracial, equitable democracy, and recognizing that this pursuit of facts, truth, and knowledge can only occur by fostering open

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academic dialogue, engaging multiple viewpoints, and addressing controversial theories and ideas.

WHEREAS, though discussion of race, gender, religion, and political philosophy, among other things, may result in “discomfort”, a term arbitrarily defined, the educational process requires pedagogical exploration of uncomfortable and complicated subject matter. “Discomfort”, if present, is unpredictable, often unavoidable, and an integral part of learning as well as institutional evolution. Placing any restriction on this imperative is indeterminate, subjective, and dangerously limits the capacity of educators to explore a wide variety of topics and is in opposition to the goals of education and the development of essential critical thinking skills. These external proposals, in effect, prohibit or restrict curriculum on any issue of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and political philosophy in the teaching and education of students.

WHEREAS, over seventy organizations, including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), issued the [Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History](#) (June 16, 2021) stating their “firm opposition to a spate of legislative proposals being introduced across the country that target academic lessons, presentations, and discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities . . . In higher education, under principles of academic freedom that have been widely endorsed, professors are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. Educators, not politicians, should make decisions about teaching and learning.”

WHEREAS, the guiding principles of the University of Colorado are to “Promote and uphold the principles of ethics, integrity, transparency, and accountability . . . [and to] Promote faculty, student, and staff diversity to ensure the rich interchange of ideas in the pursuit of truth and learning, including diversity of political, geographic, cultural, intellectual, and philosophical perspectives.”

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Council resolutely rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to dictate academic discussion and relevant academically-related training on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or the Board of Regents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Council calls upon President Todd Saliman, Chancellor Donald M. Elliman (CU Anschutz), Chancellor Philip P. DiStefano (CU Boulder), Chancellor Michelle Marks (CU Denver), and Chancellor Venkat Reddy (CU Colorado Springs) to affirm that they reject any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate academic discussion on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or the Board of Regents.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Council stands with our K-12 colleagues throughout the country who may be affected by this pernicious legislation when they seek to educate students regarding history and culture across the curriculum.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Council of the University of Colorado affirms the [Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism](#), authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, endorsed by over seventy organizations, and issued on June 16, 2021.

APPROVED