

UNIVERSITY SENATE
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Resolution: Defending Academic Freedom to Teach About Race and Gender Justice and Critical Race Theory

Sponsored by: Governance Council
Date: 03/16/2022

WHEREAS state legislative proposals are being introduced across the United States that target academic discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities, and;

WHEREAS faculty have responsibility for “the conduct of the University’s instruction, research, and service programs”, as stated in Article VI. Section 3 of *The State University of New York Policies of the Board of Trustees*.

WHEREAS Article 1, Section 2.1 of the University at Albany Faculty Bylaws elaborates on the principle above, specifying that “the Faculty shall be responsible for the development of the educational program of the University and for the conduct of the University's instructional, research, and service programs, subject to the provisions of the New York State Education Law and The Policies of the Board of Trustees,” and;

WHEREAS the University Faculty Handbook affirms the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of universities in Part 2, Section A.1. University at Albany Faculty Statement of Ethics, wherein it states that “As teachers, faculty encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students... They respect and defend the free inquiry of their associates... 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”, and;

WHEREAS the University at Albany has made advancing diversity, equity and inclusion a key strategic priority, and;

WHEREAS educating about systemic barriers to realizing a multiracial democracy based on race or gender should be understood as central to the active and engaged pursuit of knowledge in the 21st century to produce engaged and informed citizens, and;

WHEREAS over seventy organizations, including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), 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”, and;

WHEREAS in a nation that has for centuries struggled with issues of racial inequity and injustice, many students do not have adequate knowledge of BIPOC and LGBTQI history and the policies that contributed to inequities, the University at Albany has a responsibility and opportunity to help build equity and social justice.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that University Senate resolutely rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum 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 Boards of Trustees, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Senate stands with our K-12 colleagues throughout the country who may be affected by this pernicious legislation, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Senate 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, and finally;

BE IT RESOLVED that the University Senate calls upon President Rodriguez and Provost Kim to affirm that they reject any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum 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 Boards of Trustees.