



UCSF Committee on Academic Freedom FAQ

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Q: *What is academic freedom?*

A: Academic freedom has traditionally been defined by the cornerstones of freedom of inquiry and research; freedom of teaching; and freedom of expression and publication. Academic freedom enables the University to uphold its essential mission to discover and disseminate knowledge to students and the public at large. The bounds of academic freedom are to be judged according to prevailing community standards and professional ethics.

Q: *What does the Committee on Academic Freedom do?*

A: The primary functions of the Committee on Academic Freedom are: 1) to serve as a resource for individual faculty who feel that their academic freedom has been compromised; 2) to study and report to the San Francisco Division on any condition within or without the University that may affect the academic freedom of the University, its faculty or its students; and 3) to report to the Division at least every 5 years on the condition of the San Francisco campus in terms of academic freedom and how this culture affects faculty recruitment/retention and University reputation. Past minutes and annual reports detailing the activities of the Committee on Academic Freedom can be found on the [Committee website](#).

The Committee on Academic Freedom also organizes events as needed and is currently considering a symposium on “Science, Government and Academic Freedom in a Polarized Political Environment,” which could be offered in fall 2005. In addition, the Committee participates in system-wide events such as the [Academic Freedom Forum](#) held on June 11, 2003 at the University of California, Berkeley.

Q: *Who makes up the Committee on Academic Freedom?*

A: The Committee on Academic Freedom consists of five or six members, with a representative from each of the Schools of the Division and one representative from the Clinical or Adjunct series.

Q: *What are some examples of infringements on academic freedom?*

A: Examples of infringements on academic freedom that may trigger investigation by the Committee on Academic Freedom include:

- Policies that impose or prohibit certain ideas, theories, beliefs, areas of instruction or political views;
- Policies that censure or penalize faculty for pursuing certain lines of inquiry;
- Policies that seek to place limitations on sources of research funding;
- Policies that seek to track, monitor or subpoena the communication and/or work product of faculty;
- Restraints on dissemination of research results;
- “Loyalty oaths” or other types of mandatory University pledges;
- Imposition of “speech codes” that seek to curb the use of certain language; and
- In some cases, irregular faculty appointment that creates an underclass of faculty and acts as an impediment to scholarship.

Q: *What are some examples of past issues handled by the Committee on Academic Freedom?*

A: In past academic years, the Committee on Academic Freedom has:

- Considered the academic freedom implications of and suggested modifications to the University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) Resolution Related to Restrictions on Research Funding;
- Issued a confidential report to the Chair of the San Francisco Division regarding the research review procedures of the UCSF Cancer Center and whether such procedures infringed on the academic freedom rights of faculty doing certain types of research;
- Considered ways to address increased scrutiny of research funded by the National Institutes for Health;
- Considered the academic freedom implications of a petition for a UCSF Policy Not to Accept Tobacco Industry Funding;
- Reviewed and provided feedback on the UCORP Resolution Related to Sensitive Unclassified Technical Information (SUTI);
- Reviewed the Academic Senate Initial Report and Recommendations on the Future of Clinician Scientists, which discussed potential denial of promotions for Ladder Rank and In Residence series faculty for lack of demonstration of research independence; and
- Discussed academic freedom concerns related to student evaluations of teaching faculty when evaluations include inappropriate or crude language.

Q: *Who should I contact if I feel my academic freedom has been compromised?*

A: If you feel you have a legitimate concern related to individual or University academic freedom, please contact the Office of the Academic Senate at (415) 476-8827 or e-mail UCSFacademicsenate@senate.ucsf.edu. Senate staff will forward your inquiry to the Chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom. Faculty members in all series are encouraged to bring issues forward with the Committee.

Please be mindful that the Committee on Privilege and Tenure handles Senate faculty grievances, Senate faculty disciplinary cases, and early termination cases where a Senate or non-Senate faculty member challenges whether there is good cause for his or her early termination. The Academic Senate Office can assist you in determining which Committee is the proper forum to field your inquiry. Examples of matters handled by the Committee on Privilege and Tenure can be found [here](#). (Note: If you are a non-Senate faculty member with a grievance or disciplinary action pending against you, you may contact the [Problem Resolution Center](#) for mediation services at (415) 502-1082 or the [Office of Academic Personnel](#) at (415) 476-8123 for additional resources.)

Q: *How can I get involved with the Committee on Academic Freedom?*

A: Each spring, the Senate issues a Call for Nominations to solicit eligible faculty for service on standing committees of the Academic Senate, including the Committee on Academic Freedom. The Committee on Committees (COC) reviews the nominations to ensure that appointments meet the requirements of Senate bylaws and then selects all members of standing committees, as well as Committee chairs and Division officers. These selections are subject to approval of the faculty as a whole at the last meeting of the UCSF Division of the Senate, which generally takes place in June.

Faculty who are ineligible for Senate service or who do not have time to serve on a Committee may still participate in Senate activities by attending Division meetings, serving on ad hoc committees or task forces, mentoring junior faculty, or communicating with Committee chairs and/or Senate officers regarding important issues.

Q: *What are some helpful resources on academic freedom?*

A: The following links may be helpful in understanding and getting involved with issues related to academic freedom:

- [University Committee on Academic Freedom \(UCAF\)](#)
- [APM 010 – University of California Academic Freedom Statement](#)
- [American Association of University Professors \(AAUP\)](#)
- [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education \(FIRE\)](#)
- [Human Rights Watch Academic Freedom Initiative](#)
- [Academic Freedom Lecture Fund](#)