

Joint Statement in Support of Academic Freedom from the Marin Community College District (MCCD), the United Professors of Marin (UPM), and the Academic Senate of College of Marin

In recent months, higher education institutions across the nation have faced unprecedented challenges to academic freedom, including efforts to restrict curriculum, limit classroom discussions, and pressure faculty on matters of scholarship and pedagogy. At this critical moment, it is essential that we reaffirm our collective commitment to the principles that sustain genuine education and democratic discourse.

The Marin Community College District, the United Professors of Marin, and the Academic Senate of College of Marin affirm our shared commitment to the principles of academic freedom, the support of faculty in their professional responsibilities, and fostering a respectful environment for teaching and learning.

"Academic freedom protects a teacher's right to teach and a student's right to learn and is necessary in order for College of Marin (COM) to fulfill its mission of providing excellent educational opportunities for all members of our diverse community" (Marin Community College District Board Policy 4030, 2024).

Academic freedom is essential to the mission of higher education. Academic freedom means that faculty members may discuss their own subject or area of competence in the classroom as well as other relevant matters, including controversial matters, without censorship or retribution so long as that discussion does not impair the rights of others nor violate professional standards. In upholding academic freedom, faculty members distinguish between personal opinions and factual information, and all faculty and students have a responsibility to engage in teaching and learning that honors, respects, and supports divergent viewpoints. MCCD, UPM, and the Academic Senate recognize that protecting these academic freedoms is central to advancing knowledge, fostering critical inquiry, and preparing students for meaningful participation in a democratic society.

We also reaffirm our commitment to supporting faculty as professionals and as valued members of the College of Marin community. This includes providing the resources, collegial support, and working conditions necessary for faculty to thrive and excel in service of our students.

Equally important is the recognition of faculty responsibility in shaping and managing the classroom environment. Faculty are entrusted with the authority and professional judgment to maintain a classroom environment that is conducive to student learning, growth, and development in which students are free from discrimination, prejudice, and harassment and in which students are free to express relevant ideas and opinions. Faculty are empowered to establish clear expectations, maintain respectful dialogue, and ensure that learning spaces are inclusive, safe, and conducive to the success of all students. In exercising this responsibility, faculty contribute not only to academic excellence but also to the cultivation of mutual respect, equity, and belonging across the College.

Finally, we jointly affirm that reinforcing academic freedom is a shared responsibility. We are committed to ensuring that all faculty members and students can carry out their work in an environment that is secure, respectful, and free from intimidation or harassment.

Together, MCCC, UPM, and the Academic Senate pledge to continue our collaborative efforts to safeguard academic freedom, to support faculty in their vital roles, and to ensure that the College of Marin remains a place where teaching, learning, and scholarship flourish.

References

Marin Community College District Board (2024). Policy 4030: Academic Freedom (Policy No. 4030). Marin Community College District. <https://policies.marin.edu/sites/default/files/BP4030-AcademicFreedom.pdf>

Marin Community College District and United Professors of Marin Collective Bargaining Agreement (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2027), Article 2: Academic Freedom. https://hr.marin.edu/sites/default/files/UPM_MCCD_CBA_20241220_0.pdf