



Faculty Resolution on Academic Freedom

resolved by vote of the faculty of Washington College on November 1, 2021

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

WHEREAS educators have a moral and institutional responsibility to guide students in a clear-eyed investigation of the world we inhabit, including the historical processes that shape the present, even when such investigations may be uncomfortable or controversial;

WHEREAS the term “divisive,” which has recently been used to deter teaching about race and racism, chills the capacity of educators to explore a wide variety of topics appropriate to the goals of education and the development of essential critical thinking skills, and deprives students of opportunities to discuss and foster solutions to social injustices;

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;

WHEREAS the Faculty Handbook affirms the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of colleges and universities, citing the American Association of University Professors’ [1940 statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) (p. 102) and its endorsement by the Board of Visitors and Governors of Washington College.

WHEREAS faculty have responsibility for the curriculum at their colleges and universities, as reinforced by AAUP guidelines ([Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#)) and stated explicitly in the By-Laws of the Board of Visitors and Governors (Article VII) and the Washington College Faculty Handbook (p. 60);

WHEREAS Washington College’s Mission Statement believes “engagement with cultures and communities both local and global offer our students ample opportunity for personal exploration and shared challenges” and aims “to develop habits of analytic thought, clear communication, aesthetic insight, ethical sensitivity, and civic responsibility in our students.”

WHEREAS Washington College’s Diversity Statement affirms the “the worth, dignity, and safety of human beings of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, gender identities and/or expressions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, cultural backgrounds, cognitive or physical abilities, emotional and behavioral characteristics, ages, and educational levels” and commits “to fostering a more equitable, inclusive, and engaged community that embraces all the complexity that each person brings to campus.”

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.”

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, Washington College has a responsibility and opportunity to help build equity and social justice.



THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washington College Faculty resolutely rejects any attempts to restrict or dictate college curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by bodies external to the faculty.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty stands with our K-12 and Public Institution colleagues in the region and throughout the country who may be affected by this pernicious legislation when they seek to teach the truth in U.S. history and civics education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty calls upon the President and Provost to affirm that they reject any attempts to restrict or dictate college curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by bodies external to the faculty.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Faculty 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.