

**ACADEMIC SENATE
OF
THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

AS-3193-14/FA (Rev)
September 4-5, 2014

**PROTECTING THE ACADEMIC FREEDOM OF CALIFORNIA STATE
UNIVERSITY FACULTY**

- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of the California State University (ASCSU) reaffirm its constitutional commitment, “to advance the principles of academic freedom and freedom of inquiry...,”¹ including “the right of faculty to teach, conduct research or other scholarship, and publish free of external constraints other than those normally denoted by the scholarly standards of a discipline”²; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the ASCSU deplore and strongly oppose attempts by outside political organizations, lobbying groups, and private donors to pressure the CSU Administration, Board of Trustees, and the legislators to limit or question the academic freedom and freedom of speech of CSU faculty; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the ASCSU urge the Chancellor and all campus Presidents to publicly denounce actions by such groups that target CSU faculty and strongly support academic freedom and freedom of speech in our university; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the ASCSU distribute this resolution to the CSU Board of Trustees, CSU Chancellor, CSU campus Presidents, CSU campus Senate Chairs, CSU Provosts/Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, California Faculty Association, CSU-ERFA, Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges, Academic Senate of the University of California, California Community Colleges’ Board of Governors, University of California Board of Regents, Members of the California Assembly Committee on Higher Education, Members of the California Senate Committee on Higher Education, Legislative Leadership, and the President of the California State Student Association.

RATIONALE: *Academic freedom and freedom of speech are the core values of university education. Higher education is based on the freedom of teaching, inquiry, and dissemination of knowledge. To educate students and explore new frontiers of knowledge, universities have to provide a safe environment for debate and discussion of a wide range of ideas even, and especially, when they are unpopular and in the minority. Attacks on academic freedom hinder the mission of universities and have a chilling effect on the freedom to teach, research, and advance knowledge.*

¹ The Constitution of the Academic Senate of the California State University, Article 1, Section 1. Purposes.
http://www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Records/About_the_Senate/documents/ASCSU_Constitution_2013_Revision.pdf

² “Academic Freedom and Free Speech Rights,” AS-2649-04/FA - March 11-12, 2004
<http://www.calstate.edu/acadsen/Records/Resolutions/2010-2011/2994.shtml>;

We have recently witnessed a surge in concerted campaigns against CSU faculty such as attacks on faculty at Fresno State in 2008³; Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo in 2009⁴; faculty at Cal State Northridge, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and Cal State Fresno in 2012⁵. Presidents on these three campuses were quick to stand up to outside pressure in 2012 and defend academic freedom of their faculty,⁶ yet the attacks continued and targeted faculty at San Jose State University in 2013; San Diego State University in 2013 and, most recently, San Francisco State University. In all of these cases, outside political interest groups have organized letter-writing campaigns to campus administrators, Chancellor's Office, Board of Trustees, and legislators accusing faculty of "misuse of state university funds," organizing biased conferences, and advocating partisan political views. Using the state of California's Public Records Act, these special interest groups accessed hundreds of email communications among the faculty and scholars of different universities and forced the affected faculty to spend innumerable hours defending themselves. Although all affected faculty were eventually cleared by the campus administrators from any wrongdoing, the harassment has continued, in some cases for years. In the absence of a clear statement by the CSU leadership in defense of the targeted faculty, the local administrators have responded differently to each situation.

These repeated assaults on academic freedom on different CSU campuses by outside pressure groups requires a public response from the CSU leadership in defense of academic freedom, and public denunciation of outside interference in educational activities of the university. Lack of such a response can embolden these political pressure groups to continue harassment of faculty.

Approved – November 7, 2014

³ In 2008 the Middle Eastern Studies Project at CSU Fresno came under attack by outside political groups based on unsubstantiated accusations against the faculty teaching in that area. The ASCSU approved a resolution defending academic freedom of faculty teaching in area studies: "Protecting Academic Freedom for California State University (CSU) Academic Programs, Including Area Studies" AS-2822-07/FA (Rev) <http://www.calstate.edu/acadsen/Records/Resolutions/2007-2008/2822.shtml>

⁴ Threatening to pull donations from the university, a major California agribusiness put pressure on Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo administration to change the format of a lecture by sustainable food advocate Michael Pollan in 2009. Responding to this situation, the ASCU approved a resolution against private donors' interference in academic activities of faculty: "Resolution on Private Donors' Respect for Academic Freedom" <http://www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Records/Resolutions/2009-2010/2936.shtml>.

⁵ Several faculty and administrators, who have invited an Israeli historian, critical of Israeli government's policies, to speak on CSU campuses, were targeted by groups and organizations supportive of the government of Israel.

⁶ <http://www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Records/Resolutions/2011-2012/documents/3061Attachment.pdf>