

## **Statement on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech**

In its Faculty Handbook, St. Mary's College of Maryland offers a robust defense of academic freedom:

Institutions of higher education, including St. Mary's College of Maryland, exist for the common good. The common good depends on the free search for truth and its free expression. Academic freedom is the freedom to discuss all relevant matters in the classroom, to explore all avenues of scholarship, research, and creative expression, and to speak or write without institutional discipline or restraint on matters of public concern as well as on matters related to professional duties and the functioning of the College. Academic responsibility implies the faithful performance of professional duties and obligations, the recognition of the demands of the academic enterprise, and the candor to make it clear that when one is speaking on matters of public interest, one is not speaking for the institution. All faculty members must maintain their professional competence and their ability to display it in their lectures, performances, publications and exhibitions.<sup>1</sup>

Academic freedom is grounded in a commitment to freedom of speech. A public college like ours must be absolutely committed to protecting freedom of speech, both for constitutional and academic reasons. Freedom of speech is, of course, guaranteed by the Constitution and includes, unambiguously, protection for speech that some find offensive, uncivil, or even hateful. Diversity of opinion or perspective is one of the greatest strengths of our public honors college; but it also means that students and others may sometimes hear ideas they strongly disagree with and find deeply offensive.<sup>2</sup>

At a time when our country is experiencing deep political divisions, the Faculty of St. Mary's College of Maryland believes that it is necessary to reaffirm our strongest commitment to these principles of academic freedom and free speech. As the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) noted in its 1970 statement on Freedom and Responsibility:

Continuing attacks on the integrity of our universities and on the concept of academic freedom itself come from many quarters. These attacks, marked by tactics of intimidation and harassment and by political interference with the autonomy of colleges and universities, provoke harsh responses and counter-responses. Especially in a repressive atmosphere, the faculty's responsibility to defend its freedoms cannot be separated from its responsibility to uphold those freedoms by its own actions. . .<sup>3</sup>

We, the faculty of St. Mary's College of Maryland, pledge our commitment to these principles and welcome the support of our administration and the Board of Trustees in defending them.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.smcm.edu/campus-rights/wp-content/uploads/sites/66/2014/12/facultybylaws2014.pdf>, p. 4

<sup>2</sup> Some of this language is drawn from a statement on "Free speech at the University of Minnesota: Four Core Principles," approved by a majority of members on the University of Minnesota's Faculty Consultative Committee, March 10 2016, [http://usenate.umn.edu/usenate/docs/160505free\\_speech\\_core\\_principles.pdf](http://usenate.umn.edu/usenate/docs/160505free_speech_core_principles.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aaup.org/our-work/government-relations/past-campaigns-academic-bill-rights/aaup-policies-classroom>