

## **ACADEMIC FREEDOM AT JOHNS HOPKINS**

Academic Freedom is the wellspring of a free and open university. The freedom of thought it protects is at the core of the search for truth, and its free expression lies at the very heart of our university mission.

Academic Freedom is the liberty to speak and learn and invite others to do the same, to create and pursue research; and to participate, on and off campus, in public debate. It promotes a diversity of views and perspectives, and necessarily tolerates the expression of views on a broad range of academic and political subjects that are thought by some to be wrong, distasteful, offensive or even hateful.

Although tenure may form its backbone, Academic Freedom extends to all faculty, students, and staff alike. A university must have breathing space for free and creative exploration and experimentation, and for the sifting and winnowing of the ideas that define its very purpose.

Like the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, on whose precepts academic freedom is based, however, Academic Freedom is not absolute. One does not have the right to defame or threaten, deface or harass, infringe on the privacy of others, or otherwise violate the law. Reasonable, viewpoint neutral, restrictions on the time, place, and manner of expression are legitimate ways to set the boundaries and ensure the orderly functions of the university.

Academic Freedom also entails academic responsibility. There is no protected right to plagiarize or otherwise engage in academic or scientific dishonesty. The exercise of judgment on the basis of professional criteria and the highest intellectual standards, in matters such as academic quality, and faculty and student performance evaluations, is both permissible and necessary. Faculty who express their personal views on controversial subjects in the classroom must make it clear that students may disagree with those views. When one is speaking on matters of public interest, it should be made clear that personal views do not represent those of the institution. Professors who express their personal views on a contested issue must make it

clear that students may disagree with those views without penalty.

A professional and respectful exchange of ideas is integral to creating a positive and professional environment for learning, teaching, and research. On occasion, university officials, faculty, or students, may disagree with, and even be offended by, a statement or other expressive activity. They should be free to rebut or even condemn such speech, but not to obstruct, prevent, or punish it. Speech on academic, political, or cultural matters, for example, even when deemed offensive to some, is not alone grounds for sanctions against any member of the university community. The more appropriate response to such statements in an academic setting is objection, persuasion, and debate.

Johns Hopkins University is not a narrow enclave. Its mission, its influence, and its presence reach far beyond the traditional campus. This necessarily brings it into contact with countries and cultures, and other institutions, that do not share the same understanding of free speech and academic freedom principles. In these situations, special care is required to maintain our standards.

Johns Hopkins continues to expand its connections to a range of research, funding, and other partnerships with external public and private entities. It continues to develop new roles and relationships with other organizations, many of which involve funding for university research and academic programs. Some funding sources may seek to control data and research findings, or limit their dissemination. In response to such requests, special care must be taken to maintain the university's core principles of free and independent inquiry.

Johns Hopkins University was home to the very early development of the concept of Academic Freedom in the modern research university. The torch of intellectual freedom and open inquiry is an important part of its history, and its legacy. Each of us, in our time, as members of this community of scholars, bears a responsibility for nurturing that flame and passing it on. It is our heritage!