



University of New Mexico Staff Council 2023 Resolution #3

Name: Defending Academic Freedom for Faculty and Staff

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Adopted by Staff Council: March 21, 2023

1. Whereas, The Faculty Senate of the University of New Mexico passed a resolution “Defending Academic Freedom to Teach About Race and Gender Justice and Critical Race Theory”ⁱ in which they state:

WHEREAS multiple states have already passed, are in the process of debating, and have proposed legislation to curb and limit academic freedom by targeting, undermining, and/or prohibiting academic discussions of racism, gender, sexuality, and related issues deemed “divisive” in American history in primary, secondary, and/or higher education schools, colleges, and universities; and

WHEREAS multiple school districts are also attempting and passing book bans and otherwise restricting access to books in schools, particularly books on racial history and LGBTQ+ relationships and expression; and

WHEREAS multiple organizations in the United States are soliciting, circulating, and publishing misleading information about curriculum in order to encourage the rejection of race and social justice education; and

2. Whereas, the Faculty Senate called upon Staff Council to support the resolution on academic freedom for UNM faculty; and

3. Whereas, staff are integrally involved in support of the academic, research, and service missions of the University of New Mexico, which includes educating about systemic racism, sexism, and gender discrimination; and

4. Whereas, the academic freedom of faculty to teach about race and gender justice and critical race theory extends to the work and workplaces of staff. Some specific interests include:

- The rights of groups such as Instructional Assistants, Instructional Media Specialists, Research Assistants, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Educators, Employee and Organizational Development, and others to express their views on academic matters in the classroom and when conducting research;

- The rights of Academic Advisement and Student Success staff, especially in Student Resource Centers, to provide safe, culturally sensitive advisement and student advocacy that positively impacts the retention, graduation, and professional success of students;
- The rights of library and museum staff to reject attempts to ban books and media or restrict access to materials on racial history or LGBTQ+ people;
- The rights of the staff of the University of New Mexico to examine the social determinants of health, socioeconomic, educational, and legal inequities, and their root causes, in an effort to eliminate said inequities; and

5. Whereas, Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual - Policy 2220: Freedom of Expression and Dissentⁱⁱ supports academic freedom:

As an institution that exists for the express purposes of education, research, and public service, the University is dependent upon the unfettered flow of ideas, not only in the classroom and the laboratory, but also in all University activities. As such, protecting freedom of expression is of central importance to the University. The exchange of diverse viewpoints may expose people to ideas some find offensive, even abhorrent. The way that ideas are expressed may cause discomfort to those who disagree with them. The appropriate response to such speech is speech expressing opposing ideas and continued dialogue, not curtailment of speech; and

6. Whereas, the University's mission statementⁱⁱⁱ values "Inclusion: We respect and celebrate the differences of all persons and value working in a collaborative environment where diversity is cherished and there is a shared sense of belonging"; and

7. Whereas, the UNM 2040 Strategic Framework^{iv} includes the goal to "build on the strength of our diverse cultures."

8. Resolved, That Staff Council stands with the Faculty Senate and supports the "Defending Academic Freedom to Teach About Race and Gender Justice and Critical Race Theory" resolution that "resolutely rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the state or federal legislature, or the Boards of Trustees or Board of Regents"; and

9. Resolved, That within the guidelines of Policy 2220, Staff Council rejects attempts, internal or external, to restrict or dictate the free speech rights of staff to address issues of racism, gender, and sexuality in the workplace, classroom, and healthcare setting; and

10. Resolved, That Staff Council stands with K-12 school teachers and staff in New Mexico and across the country whose academic freedom is targeted by harmful legislation; and

11. Resolved, That Staff Council calls upon the UNM Board of Regents; Dr. Garnett Stokes, President; Teresa Costantinidis, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration; Dr. James Holloway, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Douglas Ziedonis, Executive Vice President for HSC and CEO of the UNM Health System; Dr. Assata Zerai, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion; Cinnamon Blair, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer; Kathy Agnew and Kevin Stevenson, Assistant Vice Presidents for Human Resources; and other university officials to publicly defend the

academic freedom of the faculty and staff of the University of New Mexico in the face of threats to mute discussions of racial and gender justice.

ⁱ <https://facgov.unm.edu/senate/meetings/5kb2/dfzw/>

ⁱⁱ <https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2220.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://opportunity.unm.edu/vision/index.html>

^{iv} <http://opportunity.unm.edu/>