

**Resolution Reconfirming Our Commitment to the Principles of
Academic Freedom and Shared Governance**

1. Whereas — Chapter VII of the [University Statutes](#), “Code of Academic Freedom and Tenure,” states in Section 70.a. that:

“Academic freedom implies that all officers of instruction are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subjects; that they are entitled to freedom in research and in the publication of its results; and that they may not be penalized by the University for expressions of opinion or associations in their private or civic capacity; but they should bear in mind the special obligations arising from their position in the academic community;” and,
2. Whereas — In October 2001, in a time of loss, grief, and heightened emotions, the University Senate reaffirmed Columbia’s commitment to “the free expression of ideas and open debate as well as the respect for diversity of opinions and beliefs”; and,
3. Whereas — In 2015, in adopting the revised Rules of University Conduct, the University Senate included the Affirmative Statement, which asserts that

“the University has a vital interest in fostering a climate in which nothing is immune from scrutiny”;
“[t]he role of the University is not to shield individuals from positions that they find unwelcome”; and
“the University has an obligation to assure members of its community that they can continue in their academic pursuits without fear for their personal security or other serious intrusions on their ability to teach and to study;” and,
4. Whereas — In 2018¹, the University Senate affirmed that
 - a. “[a]ll members of the Columbia community [...] have the freedom to disagree with conventional wisdom, with one another and with official policies whether institutional, local, national or global” and that
 - b. “[i]t is this freedom that empowers each of us to continue to question, experiment, explore and even be wrong — undertakings that support and perhaps even define the academic mission of Columbia University”; and,
 - c. these shared freedoms include a commitment to maintaining an environment of respectful disagreement; and,
5. Whereas — We, the Columbia University Senate, accordingly understand academic freedom to be **a set of rights and responsibilities governing both faculty and University leaders that protect faculty’s rights**

¹ Resolution Concerning the Principle of Academic Freedom, proposed jointly by Faculty Affairs Committees and Student Affairs Committees adopted February 2, 2018

to teach, conduct and publish research, and speak and write both on campus and off, and that are crucial to ensuring our students receive the highest quality education possible; and,

6. Whereas — We, the Columbia University Senate, believe that the protections of academic freedom allow and oblige all faculty to pursue their teaching, research and clinical endeavors and communicate to a wider public in ways that strengthen our society and affirm the social importance of higher education; and,
7. Whereas — We, the Columbia University Senate, are committed to the rights and responsibilities of faculty as stewards of the institution, in the interest of its long-term well-being, and its capacity to be of benefit to its students, its immediate community, and the world at large;
8. Therefore, be it resolved that the Columbia University Senate is committed to the following principles of academic freedom and shared governance:
 - a. Academic activities at Columbia are subject to review set by normal institutional processes in accordance with best professional practice; and
 - b. Faculty speech and expression, including in the press and via social media, are subject to the protections and restrictions laid out in the Affirmative Statement §440, including “the right to speak, to study, research, to teach, and to express their own views” and the obligation to “allow others in the community to do the same”, except in cases of genuine threat of harassment, unjustifiable invasion of individual privacy, or false defamation; and
 - c. The University and its leaders should refrain from taking political positions in their institutional capacity, either as explicit statements or as the basis of policy, except in the rare case when the University has a compelling institutional interest, such as a legal obligation, that requires it to do so; and
 - d. Both principles of academic freedom and obligations of institutional stewardship permit inquiry into whether the University’s corporate activities remain compatible with “paramount social values”²; and,
 - e. University policy in general should arise from mechanisms of shared governance, and should not be set by, or in deference to, entities external to the institution or those mechanisms; and,
 - f. Matters of university policy that touch on or may benefit from areas of academic expertise should be informed by that expertise, and consultative bodies should be appointed with deference to the University’s strengths in faculty expertise and knowledge; and,
 - g. The University Senate, as the representative body of all University constituencies and the statutory policy-making body of the University concerning matters of academic freedom as provided by in the University Statutes §23(c), has an historic and vital role to play in convening and fostering further discussion, articulation, and/or ratification of principles around academic freedom and the rights and responsibilities that obtain to it.

Proponents: Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee
Student Affairs Committee

² In the words of [the 1967 Kalven Report](#).