

Resolution of the Missouri State University Faculty Senate

Affirming Academic Freedom and Calling for Administrative Guidance and Support Regarding Instruction on Topics Related to Cultural Competence

WHEREAS, instructors across numerous programs, departments, schools, and colleges at Missouri State University teach and conduct scholarship on subjects related to culture, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion, including but not limited to gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, racism, sexism, structural inequality, cultural differences, and social justice; and

WHEREAS, these topics are central to many academic disciplines, required by many accrediting bodies, and often embedded in professional competencies that students must demonstrate for graduation, licensure, and employment; and are essential to the University's mission of cultural competence and ethical leadership by advancing knowledge, fostering critical inquiry, and preparing students to engage thoughtfully and effectively in a diverse and pluralistic society; and

WHEREAS, in recent months and years, such topics have become the subject of heightened cultural and political debate at the local, state, and national levels; and

WHEREAS, institutions of higher education in several states have enacted or implemented policies that restrict the discussion of certain topics, ban specific readings or curricular materials, or impose sanctions on instructors following complaints from students, parents, elected officials, or advocacy groups; and

WHEREAS, at present, the University has not yet issued comprehensive guidance, policies, or training needed by instructors to navigate this evolving legal, political, and cultural landscape; and

WHEREAS, instructors require clarity regarding institutional expectations, legal parameters, and the processes by which complaints about course content will be reviewed and adjudicated; and

WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate affirms that academic freedom—including the freedom to teach, discuss, and assign scholarly materials relevant to one's discipline—is foundational to the integrity of higher education;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate requests the development and dissemination of written guidance outlining:

1. The University's policies regarding academic freedom and curricular authority;
2. Applicable state and federal legal frameworks affecting classroom instruction;
3. Established procedures for responding to complaints concerning course content;
and
4. The rights and responsibilities of instructors in the context of such complaints; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the University establish a clear process by which instructors will be supported and, when appropriate, defended in cases where complaints arise from good-faith teaching of material grounded in recognized scholarly standards; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate requests that the Administration consult with the Faculty Senate and relevant faculty governance bodies in the development of any new policies, guidance documents, or training initiatives related to instruction regarding culture, diversity, accessibility, inclusion or other contested topics; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution be transmitted to the President, Provost, Board of Governors, and other relevant administrative leaders for prompt consideration and action.