

Academic Freedom

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One of the most talked about areas and the one probably the least understood is "Academic Freedom." Webster's New World Dictionary defines Academic Freedom as the "freedom of a teacher (or student) to express his beliefs (political, economic, etc.) without arbitrary interference." Academic as implied here indicates one which belongs to a learned society. Freedom then

would indicate an exemption or liberation from control of a person or some arbitrary power, i.e., being able to act, move, and use without hindrance or restraint.

The subject, Academic Freedom, is often misinterpreted by those of us in the professional field of institutional endeavor; however, it is an area which not only carries a considerable amount of choice in our lives as instructors and as citizens, but at the same time carries considerable responsibility. It is often easy to accept the good things in life, especially the freedoms we enjoy, those of freedom of speech, freedom of action, and freedom of worship; but we fail many times to realize that all of these carry with them a deep sense of responsibility and courage. We are hearing more today of freedom than we probably have heard in many years. We must realize that this freedom which we enjoy not only as a citizen of this country but also as a member of the academic family must also carry with it knowledge and responsibility. It has been stated in article XII of the Standards for Accrediting Teachers Colleges established in 1941 and revised in 1947 by the American Association of Colleges, that Academic Freedom entitles the teacher to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of his other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution. The teacher is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his subject, but he should be careful not to introduce into his teaching controversial matter which has no relation to the subject. Probably this is the area that is most often used by those who wish to express themselves on the fringe areas. One should give close consideration to the things that he says in the classroom, and he should realize that Academic Freedom does not guarantee or encourage a teacher to use his position in the classroom or in the community to express or to promote

biased opinions that are not relative to his subject matter. It has always been interesting to me to observe on numerous occasions that teachers (and this is the exception rather than the rule) tend to take advantage of this Academic Freedom that we enjoy to express their personal interpretations of matters not pertinent to the subject matter in their major field. Students often are concerned with the teacher who takes advantage of the classroom to discuss issues that are not relative to a particular course. This probably is the area that we should consider in this article more than anything else.

The opinions expressed here are those of my own and not necessarily those of the institution I represent, but at the same time I enjoy this area of Academic Freedom. I cannot help being concerned with the considerable amount of responsibility that it entails. When I look out across a classroom and observe the innocent faces, the immature and pliable minds of which I am confronted, I realize that what I say and the things that I do are going to be used by these young people to shape their lives. It is this that makes me realize the responsibilities facing me in the area of Academic Freedom. The limitation of Academic Freedom, because of religion or other aims of the institution, should be clearly stated in writing at the time of appointment at a particular institution. The college or university teacher is a citizen, a member of a learned profession, and an officer of an educational institution. When he speaks or writes as a citizen, he should be free of institutional censorship or discipline, but his special position in the community imposes also special obligations. As a man of learning and an educational officer, he should remember that the public may judge his profession, his institution, his fellow workers, and his students by his utterances. Therefore, he should be accurate, truthful, and honest at all times. He should exercise appropriate re-

straint and diplomacy; he should show respect for the opinion of others and by all means should make every effort to indicate that he is *not* an institutional spokesman but merely expressing his opinion on a particular subject. It is difficult not to mention items or instances that one is aware of concerning Academic Freedom and those acts that have infringed on this area. It is also difficult to really express one's feelings relative to this area. However, having been confronted with the publication of an article such as this, it has given me ample opportunity to think, to read, and to meditate on

the subject, Academic Freedom. After having had this opportunity, I am still somewhat concerned with the complacency of those of us when it comes to the area of Academic Freedom. It is felt that through my own experiences that there have been those few who have taken advantage of the freedom enjoyed by the academic family and have made it embarrassing for the multitude or majority of those who wish to enjoy the Academic Freedom and at the same time accept the responsibility that is inherent in this area. It is possible to give many examples and expressions of Academic Freedom, those favorable

and those unfavorable; however, I feel that the one thing received from having been associated with this subject is the fact that we have something that we enjoy, that we really do not understand, and that we take for granted. We should be more conscious of the fact that those forerunners in the field of educational endeavor were foresighted enough to not restrict the instructor or the researcher to such a point that he was unable to express himself; however, by the same token these areas implied also responsibility.

Professional Growth

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Robert L. Bedwell graduated from the University of Tennessee with a B.S. in Agri. Engr. in 1960, from the University of Missouri with an M.S. in Agri. Engr. in 1961. He has two additional years of graduate study toward the Ph.D. at the University of Missouri. Mr. Bedwell was employed in a Cooperative Engineering Program for three years at the International Harvester Company in Memphis, Tennessee, he served as a Research Assistant at the University of Missouri for two years and instructor in Agricultural Engineering at Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee.

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The word "professional" implies having the characteristics of or conforming to the standards of a profession. For NACTA members some

characteristics of the professional group would be: to promote the cause of agriculture, to create a better public image of agriculture, to promote closer ties between land grant and the non-land grant institutions, and to develop and instigate ways to create better teachers.

The term "growth" means the progressive development of an organism or the like. People have three basic areas of growth: physical, mental, and spiritual. These three cannot be separated completely, but for purposes of this writing let the last two be differentiated as follows: mental growth includes gaining and retaining facts, sorting these facts and predicting from them events in the future, and relating these facts and predictions to others; spiritual growth includes the developing of the personality, character, attitudes, channeling of energies, and a dependence upon a power higher than oneself.

Putting these two sets of definitions together, it can be concluded that "professional growth" implies the continual development of those

mental and spiritual areas of a person which will make for more effective promotion of the goals or characteristics of the group to which that person owes his allegiance.

This writer would like to share some of the characteristics he feels to be necessary in any individual for that person to be able to grow professionally. All of these will further develop and mature during the professional association period, but these must be at least in an embryonic state for growth to occur.

1. One must have confidence in his ability. He must believe and know that he does have something of value to share with others. Technical and intellectual competence are the prerequisites here.
2. One must be dedicated to a cause. There must be a sense of urgency and a feeling that "our" cause is worth it all. If we don't do it, then, who will? We must accomplish this.
3. One must be willing to put in extra time. Most people have to do professional duties out-