

**Proposition:** 04-22/23

**Proposal Type:** Bill Resolution Memorial Joint Proposition Other  
(If Joint proposition, also select type)

**Title:** Proposed Policy on Academic Freedom

**Date Submitted:** 12/3/22

**Sponsor(s):** Bronstein (A&S), Beck (Library)

**Proposed Committee:**

**Prior Approvals:**

**Proposal:**

Whereas the American Association of University Professors has recently called attention to issues of coordinated targeted harassment of university professors for their social media use<sup>1</sup>;

And whereas while ARP 3.63 and 3.70 specifically note the broad freedoms of speech that protect NMSU faculty, staff, and students, they do not address “extramural utterances,” including social media posts, statements made to the media, non-NMSU-hosted websites, or statements at public gatherings:

And whereas the current language of ARP 3.70 suggests limitations on faculty extramural speech;

And whereas ARP 3.70 has resulted in disciplinary action to faculty members due to its breadth and ambiguity:

We propose the following language change to ARP 3.70, to read as follows:

“The quest for truth often leads the scholar into difficult and untried territory. As a dealer in ideas, the teacher or researcher comes often in conflict with prevailing belief of large segments of society and even with those of colleagues. Yet, because of the practical benefits of scholarly activity, it is profoundly important that this diversity of ideas be not only tolerated, but encouraged.

The right to support unorthodox positions, arrived at through scholarly investigation, free from coercion or reprisals, is fundamental to the continued progress of society. The right to pursue unpopular lines of inquiry and express new and unaccepted ideas falls within the framework of a special set of guarantees called academic freedom. In granting these guarantees, society expresses a willingness to risk the consequences because history confirms that the risk is outweighed by the benefits stemming from such a policy.

Scholars are entitled to full freedom in the conduct of their research and publication of the results, and full freedom in the classroom to discuss those topics in which they are professionally experts as determined by their credentials. The exercise of this freedom carries with it the burden of corollary responsibilities. Scholars must not knowingly misrepresent facts. They must be careful in their teaching not to introduce controversial matter bearing no relationship to their subjects. They must exercise appropriate restraint and guard against distortions and inaccuracies.

Outside their academic roles, as private citizens, scholars have neither special privileges nor special restrictions. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline for lawful extramural utterances made from personal social media accounts, personal web pages, at public gatherings, or to the media. Unless a scholar affirmatively asserts that they are speaking on behalf of New Mexico State University, an extramural utterance is not subject to NMSU constraint.”

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<sup>1</sup> “The American Association of University Professors has long held that academic freedom includes the freedom to address the larger community with regard to any matter of social, political, economic, or other interest, without institutional discipline or restraint, save in response to fundamental violations of professional ethics or statements that suggest disciplinary incompetence. Administrative responses to several recent cases of targeted harassment of faculty members over their postings on social media raise concern that the freedom of faculty members to speak as citizens is insufficiently defended at those affected institutions.” See <https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/files/Mariah/On-Institutional-Social-Media-Policies.pdf>