

Chapter 1

A Statement of Principles

Section A

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

“Academic freedom” in the traditional sense refers to the University’s continuing policy of maintaining conditions of free inquiry, thought, and discussion for every member of the faculty in professional activities of research, teaching, public speaking, and publication. These conditions are regarded as necessary rights accruing to appointment on the faculty. Faculty members have the correlative obligation to speak and write with accuracy, with due respect for the opinions of others, and with proper care to specify that they speak on the authority of their own work and reputation, not as special pleaders for any social group or as purporting to represent the University. Such rights and obligations presuppose that faculty members adequately perform other academic duties and that they do not accept pecuniary return for activities outside of the University without a proper understanding with University authorities.

Some persons broaden the meaning of academic freedom beyond individual rights and duties to include faculty participation in determination of University policy. At Vanderbilt, the faculties of the College of Arts and Science, the Graduate School, and the professional schools (the Executive Faculty in the School of Medicine) determine the requirements and recommend all candidates for degrees. Through their collegial bodies and their elected representatives in the Faculty Senate, the faculties are free at any time to examine, debate, and make recommendations concerning any educational policy, program, or practice of the University.

“Academic responsibility” means adherence to the following values and standards of conduct (adapted from the *Beach Report on Issues of Conscience and Academic Freedom*, 1960):

Vanderbilt University is a community of men and women devoted to the search for truth. A self-governing institution, it professes freedom from both internal and external interference which hinders accomplishment of that purpose. It is an institution that transcends, as much as it challenges and accepts, the customs and values of society. It has its own standards of excellence and responsibility that do not always conform to those of the persons and groups who support it.

The University is also part of the civic community in which it exists. Its members, both faculty and students, are entitled to exercise the rights of citizens and are subject to the responsibilities of citizens. A member of the Vanderbilt community gives thoughtful consideration to the image of the University reflected in his or her public behavior.

Members of the Vanderbilt community share a due regard and respect for law. In the event that one of its members is in jeopardy before the law, either for the sake of conscience or for the purpose of testing the validity of particular provisions of law through deliberate violation, the University will not seek to protect him or her from due process of law. Regardless of the action of the courts, however, the University reserves the right to determine whether a faculty member is fit to retain membership in the academic community, and maintains its own procedures for taking action upon, hearing, and deciding complaints against one of its members.

Section B

STUDENTS AT VANDERBILT: A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The community of Vanderbilt University is united by the goals of inquiry and education. Faculty, administration, and students are partners in an enterprise aimed at the enhancement of knowledge and the growth of the individual. All members of this community have both rights and responsibilities and are expected to observe rules required to maintain the humane order of the University. Each member must respect the rights of others and make responsible contributions to the common life.

The University, in turn, dedicates itself to the support and encouragement of a collegial community. Its dealings with students will be governed, within the limits of its resources, by the principles articulated below. It will take special care that its rules and regulations, through which these principles are implemented, shall adequately reflect and be in accordance with them.

Open Communication

The University is committed to the promotion of collegial relationships among students, faculty, and administration through the creation and maintenance of open channels of communication. The University will publish and disseminate in a timely manner its policies, procedures, and regulations concerning students, including those stating academic requirements and standards of student conduct, as well as any other information that is deemed to be important for the protection of all members of the University community.