

# Faculty Senate Resolution 24-01

## Supporting Academic Freedom and Inquiry through Institutional Neutrality on Social and Political Issues

*Sponsored by Scott Baldridge, Charles Delzell, Joshua Ellis, James Garand, Rosemary Peters-Hill, Edward Shihadeh, Wesley Shrum, Samuel Snow, Victor Stater, Jacqueline Stephens, and James R. Stoner, Jr.*

Whereas, The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) states that the function of an academic institution is “to promote inquiry and advance the sum of human knowledge, to provide general instruction to the students, and to develop experts for various branches of the public service;”<sup>1</sup>

Whereas, The AAUP further states,

*“Academic freedom [of faculty] comprises three elements: freedom of inquiry and research; freedom of teaching within the university or college; and freedom of extra-mural utterance and action;”<sup>2</sup>*

Whereas, Faculty must be responsible with these freedoms,<sup>3</sup> so must institutional leadership be responsible when it comes to making statements on behalf of the institution about a social or political issue;

Whereas, There may appear in the moment to be reasons for making statements: social pressure to show awareness, responsiveness, or empathy; desire to build goodwill with a favored group; or desire to enlist the prestige of LSU to advance a given side of an issue;

Whereas, Institutional leaders must consider the long-term costs that reactive statements, public stances, or other actions may incur: the creation of a chilling effect on free speech on campus; the discouragement of curiosity and open-minded exploration of a topic; the displacement of scholarly discourse with simplistic position statements or, worse, institutional orthodoxy; the incentivization of lobbying from inside or outside groups to endorse their preferred side of an issue; the undermining of the prestige and public trust of LSU; the calling into question silence on other issues; as well as other costs;

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<sup>1</sup> From AAUP’s “1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure,” December 31, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See responsibilities for these freedoms as described in AAUP’s “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure,” <https://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure>. See also the rights, duties and responsibilities of the academic staff from the LSU Board of Supervisors Bylaws, Article X, page 24, June 15, 2023: <https://www.lsu.edu/bos/docs/2023-bylaws-june2023.pdf>.

Whereas, LSU is uniquely situated in the state of Louisiana to elevate and improve public debate by relying on scholars who can articulate and defend their expert opinions, by hosting thoughtful discussions, by encouraging faculty and students to freely formulate, research, and express novel views from the widest range of possibilities;

Whereas, The LSU community can, over time and in support of its academic mission, respond to public debate with depth, nuance, expertise, viewpoint diversity, and a commitment to ongoing discussion in the pursuit of truth, understanding, and compassion; and

Whereas, The academic mission of Louisiana State University is,

*“Designated as a Land, Sea, and Space Grant institution, LSU secures, elevates, and advances Louisiana and the world through the generation, preservation, dissemination, and application of knowledge and cultivation of the arts and develops students who are prepared, confident, and inspired to achieve lifelong success;”<sup>4</sup>*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, That the LSU Faculty Senate affirm the following statement on institutional neutrality, to wit:

*“On social and political issues, the instrument of dissent and criticism is the individual faculty member or the individual student. The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic. The neutrality of the university as an institution arises then not from a lack of courage nor out of indifference or insensitivity. It arises out of respect for free inquiry and the obligation to cherish a diversity of viewpoints. The neutrality of LSU as an institution has its complement in the fullest freedom for its faculty and students as individuals to participate in political action and social discourse. It also finds its complement in the obligation of the university to provide a forum for the most searching and candid discussions of public issues.*

*Therefore, to empower and protect academic freedom and inquiry for faculty and students, when a social or political issue arises that does not directly concern the academic mission of LSU, leadership at or above the college or school level will not issue a position statement on that issue and will refrain from any other actions that could constrain faculty discourse. When a public issue arises that directly, significantly, and specifically affects the academic mission of LSU, or jeopardizes the culture of academic freedom and inquiry, leadership at or above the college or school level will have the responsibility to articulate the significance of that issue to our campus community.”<sup>5</sup>*

**RESOLVED**, That the Senate recommend that the University include this statement as part of LSU Policy Statement 15, “Academic Freedom, Free Speech, and Tenure.”

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<sup>4</sup> Approved by LSU Board of Supervisors on February 10, 2023. See <https://www.lsu.edu/about/mission.php>.

<sup>5</sup> The resolution and statement were adapted from “Extraordinary U: The Heterodox Academy Model of Statement Neutrality in College and University Speech on Contested Social Issues,” February 2024, <https://heterodoxacademy.org/files/Extraordinary-U-The-Heterodox-Academy-Model-of-Statement-Neutrality.pdf> and from “Kalven Committee: Report on the University’s Role in Political and Social Action,” Office of Provost, University of Chicago, November 11, 1967, [https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/KalvenRprt\\_0.pdf](https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/KalvenRprt_0.pdf).