1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure

with 1970 Interpretive Comments

In 1915 the Committee on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure of the American Association of University Professors formulated a statement of principles on academic freedom and academic tenure known as the 1915 *Declaration of Principles*, which was officially endorsed by the Association at its Second Annual Meeting held in Washington, D.C., December 31, 1915, and January 1, 1916.

In 1925 the American Council on Education called a conference of representatives of a number of its constituent members, among them the American Association of University Professors, for the purpose of formulating a shorter statement of principles on academic freedom and tenure. The statement formulated at this conference, known as the 1925 *Conference Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, was endorsed by the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities) in 1925 and by the American Association of University Professors in 1926.

In 1940, following a series of joint conferences begun in 1934, representatives of the American Association of University Professors and of the Association of American Colleges agreed on a restatement of the principles that had been set forth in the 1925 *Conference Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. This restatement is known to the profession as the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*.

Following extensive discussions on the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* with leading educational associations and with individual faculty members and administrators, a joint committee of the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges met during 1969 to reevaluate this key policy statement. On the basis of the comments received, and the discussions that ensued, the joint committee felt the preferable approach was to formulate interpretations of the 1940 *Statement* from the experience gained in implementing and applying it for over thirty years and of adapting it to current needs.

The committee submitted to the two associations for their consideration *Interpretive Comments* that are included below as footnotes to the 1940 *Statement*. These interpretations were adopted by the Council of the American Association of University Professors in April 1970 and endorsed by the Fifty-Sixth Annual Meeting as Association policy.

^{1.} The Introduction to the Interpretive Comments notes: In the thirty years since their promulgation, the principles of the 1940 "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure" have undergone a substantial amount of refinement. This has evolved through a variety of processes, including customary acceptance, understandings mutually arrived at between institutions and professors or their representatives, investigations and reports by the American Association of University Professors, and formulations of statements by that association either alone or in conjunction with the Association of American

The purpose of this statement is to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom and tenure and agreement upon procedures to ensure them in colleges and universities. Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole.² The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.

Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative with rights.³

Tenure is a means to certain ends; specifically: (1) freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities, and (2) a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession

Colleges. These comments represent the attempt of the two associations, as the original sponsors of the 1940 "Statement," to formulate the most important of these refinements. Their incorporation here as Interpretive Comments is based upon the premise that the 1940 "Statement" is not a static code but a fundamental document designed to set a framework of norms to guide adaptations to changing times and circumstances.

Also, there have been relevant developments in the law itself reflecting a growing insistence by the courts on due process within the academic community which parallels the essential concepts of the 1940 "Statement"; particularly relevant is the identification by the Supreme Court of academic freedom as a right protected by the First Amendment. As the Supreme Court said in *Keyishian v. Board of Regents*, 385 US 589 (1967), "Our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, which is of transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned. That freedom is therefore a special concern of the First Amendment, which does not tolerate laws that cast a pall of orthodoxy over the classroom."

- 2. The word "teacher" as used in this document is understood to include the investigator who is attached to an academic institution without teaching duties.
- 3. First 1970 comment: The Association of American Colleges and the American Association of University Professors have long recognized that membership in the academic profession carries with it special responsibilities. Both associations either separately or jointly have consistently affirmed these responsibilities in major policy statements, providing guidance to professors in their utterances as citizens, in the exercise of their responsibilities to the institution and to students, and in their conduct when resigning from their institution or when undertaking government-sponsored research. Of particular relevance is the "Statement on Professional Ethics" adopted in 1966 as Association policy (AAUP, Policy Documents and Reports, 11th ed. [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015], 145–46).

attractive to men and women of ability. Freedom and economic security, hence, tenure, are indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society.

Academic Freedom

- Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
- 2. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.
- 3. College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.⁶
- 4. Second 1970 comment: The intent of this statement is not to discourage what is "controversial." Controversy is at the heart of the free academic inquiry which the entire statement is designed to foster. The passage serves to underscore the need for teachers to avoid persistently intruding material which has no relation to their subject.
- 5. Third 1970 comment: Most church-related institutions no longer need or desire the departure from the principle of academic freedom implied in the 1940 "Statement," and we do not now endorse such a departure.
- 6. Fourth 1970 comment: This paragraph is the subject of an interpretation adopted by the sponsors of the 1940 "Statement" immediately following its endorsement:

If the administration of a college or university feels that a teacher has not observed the admonitions of paragraph 3 of the section on Academic Freedom and believes that the extramural utterances of the teacher have been such as to raise grave doubts concerning the teacher's fitness for his or her position, it may proceed to file charges under paragraph 4 of the section on Academic Tenure. In pressing such charges, the administration should remember that teachers are citizens and should be

Academic Tenure

After the expiration of a probationary period, teachers or investigators should have permanent or continuous tenure, and their service should be terminated only for adequate cause, except in the case of retirement for age, or under extraordinary circumstances because of financial exigencies.

In the interpretation of this principle it is understood that the following represents acceptable academic practice:

- 1. The precise terms and conditions of every appointment should be stated in writing and be in the possession of both institution and teacher before the appointment is consummated.
- 2. Beginning with appointment to the rank of full-time instructor or a higher rank,⁷ the

accorded the freedom of citizens. In such cases the administration must assume full responsibility, and the American Association of University Professors and the Association of American Colleges are free to make an investigation.

Paragraph 3 of the section on Academic Freedom in the 1940 "Statement" should also be interpreted in keeping with the 1964 "Committee A Statement on Extramural Utterances," *Policy Documents and Reports,* 31, which states inter alia: "The controlling principle is that a faculty member's expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member's unfitness for his or her position. Extramural utterances rarely bear upon the faculty member's fitness for the position. Moreover, a final decision should take into account the faculty member's entire record as a teacher and scholar."

Paragraph 5 of the "Statement on Professional Ethics," *Policy Documents and Reports,* 146, also addresses the nature of the "special obligations" of the teacher:

As members of their community, professors have the rights and obligations of other citizens. Professors measure the urgency of these obligations in the light of their responsibilities to their subject, to their students, to their profession, and to their institution. When they speak or act as private persons, they avoid creating the impression of speaking or acting for their college or university. As citizens engaged in a profession that depends upon freedom for its health and integrity, professors have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom.

Both the protection of academic freedom and the requirements of academic responsibility apply not only to the full-time probationary and the tenured teacher, but also to all others, such as part-time faculty and teaching assistants, who exercise teaching responsibilities.

7. Fifth 1970 comment: The concept of "rank of full-time instructor or a higher rank" is intended to include any person who teaches a full-time load regardless of the teacher's specific title. [For a discussion of this question, see the "Report of the Special Committee on Academic

probationary period should not exceed seven years, including within this period full-time service in all institutions of higher education; but subject to the proviso that when, after a term of probationary service of more than three years in one or more institutions, a teacher is called to another institution, it may be agreed in writing that the new appointment is for a probationary period of not more than four years, even though thereby the person's total probationary period in the academic profession is extended beyond the normal maximum of seven years.8 Notice should be given at least one year prior to the expiration of the probationary period if the teacher is not to be continued in service after the expiration of that period.9

Personnel Ineligible for Tenure," *AAUP Bulletin* 52 (September 1966): 280–82.]

8. Sixth 1970 comment: In calling for an agreement "in writing" on the amount of credit given for a faculty member's prior service at other institutions, the "Statement" furthers the general policy of full understanding by the professor of the terms and conditions of the appointment. It does not necessarily follow that a professor's tenure rights have been violated because of the absence of a written agreement on this matter. Nonetheless, especially because of the variation in permissible institutional practices, a written understanding concerning these matters at the time of appointment is particularly appropriate and advantageous to both the individual and the institution. [For a more detailed statement on this question, see "On Crediting Prior Service Elsewhere as Part of the Probationary Period," *Policy Documents and Reports*, 167–68.]

9. Seventh 1970 comment: The effect of this subparagraph is that a decision on tenure, favorable or unfavorable, must be made at least twelve months prior to the completion of the probationary period. If the decision is negative, the appointment for the following year becomes a terminal one. If the decision is affirmative, the provisions in the 1940 "Statement" with respect to the termination of service of teachers or investigators after the expiration of a probationary period should apply from the date when the favorable decision is made.

The general principle of notice contained in this paragraph is developed with greater specificity in the "Standards for Notice of Nonreappointment," endorsed by the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the American Association of University Professors (1964) (*Policy Documents and Reports*, 99). These standards are:

Notice of nonreappointment, or of intention not to recommend reappointment to the governing board, should be given in writing in accordance with the following standards:

 Not later than March 1 of the first academic year of service, if the appointment expires at the end of that year; or, if a one-year appointment terminates during an academic year, at least three months in advance of its termination.

- During the probationary period a teacher should have the academic freedom that all other members of the faculty have.¹⁰
- 4. Termination for cause of a continuous appointment, or the dismissal for cause of a teacher previous to the expiration of a term appointment, should, if possible, be considered by both a faculty committee and the governing board of the institution. In all cases where the facts are in dispute, the accused teacher should be informed before the hearing in writing of the charges and should have the opportunity to be heard in his or her own defense by all bodies that pass judgment upon the case. The teacher should be permitted to be accompanied by an advisor of his or her own choosing who may act as counsel. There should be a full stenographic record of the hearing available to the parties concerned. In the hearing of charges of incompetence the testimony should include that of teachers and other scholars, either from the teacher's own or from other institutions. Teachers on continuous appointment who are dismissed for reasons not involving moral turpitude should receive their salaries for at least a year from the date of notification of dismissal whether or not they are continued in their duties at the institution.¹¹
 - Not later than December 15 of the second academic year of service, if the appointment expires at the end of that year; or, if an initial two-year appointment terminates during an academic year, at least six months in advance of its termination.
 - At least twelve months before the expiration of an appointment after two or more years in the institution.

Other obligations, both of institutions and of individuals, are described in the "Statement on Recruitment and Resignation of Faculty Members," *Policy Documents and Reports*, 153–54, as endorsed by the Association of American Colleges and the American Association of University Professors in 1961.

10. Eighth 1970 comment: The freedom of probationary teachers is enhanced by the establishment of a regular procedure for the periodic evaluation and assessment of the teacher's academic performance during probationary status. Provision should be made for regularized procedures for the consideration of complaints by probationary teachers that their academic freedom has been violated. One suggested procedure to serve these purposes is contained in the "Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure," *Policy Documents and Reports*, 79–90, prepared by the American Association of University Professors.

11. Ninth 1970 comment: A further specification of the academic due process to which the teacher is entitled under this paragraph is contained in the "Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings," *Policy Documents and Reports*, 91–93, jointly approved by the

5. Termination of a continuous appointment because of financial exigency should be demonstrably bona fide.

Endorsers

Note: Groups that changed names subsequent to endorsing the statement are listed under their current names.

Association of American Colleges and

Association of American Colleges and
Universities1941
American Association of University
Professors 1941
American Library Association (adapted for
librarians)1946
Association of American Law Schools1946
American Political Science Association1947
American Association for Higher
Education and Accreditation1950
American Association of Colleges for
Teacher Education
Eastern Psychological Association1950
Southern Society for Philosophy and
Psychology1953
American Psychological Association1961
American Historical Association1961
Modern Language Association1962
American Economic Association
Agricultural and Applied Economic
Association
Midwest Sociological Society1963
Organization of American Historians1963
Society for Classical Studies
American Council of Learned Societies1963
American Sociological Association1963

American Association of University Professors and the Association of American Colleges in 1958. This interpretive document deals with the issue of suspension, about which the 1940 "Statement" is silent.

The "Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings" provides: "Suspension of the faculty member during the proceedings is justified only if immediate harm to the faculty member or others is threatened by the faculty member's continuance. Unless legal considerations forbid, any such suspension should be with pay." A suspension which is not followed by either reinstatement or the opportunity for a hearing is in effect a summary dismissal in violation of academic due process.

The concept of "moral turpitude" identifies the exceptional case in which the professor may be denied a year's teaching or pay in whole or in part. The statement applies to that kind of behavior which goes beyond simply warranting discharge and is so utterly blameworthy as to make it inappropriate to require the offering of a year's teaching or pay. The standard is not that the moral sensibilities of persons in the particular community have been affronted. The standard is behavior that would evoke condemnation by the academic community generally.

Southern Historical Association1963	American Speech-Language-Hearing	
American Studies Association1963	Association	.1968
Association of American Geographers1963	Association of Social and Behavioral	
Southern Economic Association1963	Scientists	.1968
Classical Association of the Middle West	College English Association	.1968
and South1964	National College Physical Education	
Southwestern Social Science Association1964	Association for Men	.1969
Archaeological Institute of America1964	American Real Estate and Urban Economics	
Southern Management Association1964	Association	.1969
American Theatre Association	Council for Philosophical Studies	
(now dissolved)1964	History of Education Society	
South Central Modern Language	American Musicological Society	
Association1964	American Association of Teachers of	
Southwestern Philosophical Society1964	Spanish and Portuguese	.1969
Council of Independent Colleges1965	Texas Community College Teachers	
Mathematical Association of America1965	Association	.1970
Arizona-Nevada Academy of Science1965	College Art Association of America	
American Risk and Insurance Association1965	Society of Professors of Education	
Academy of Management	American Anthropological Association	
American Catholic Historical Association1966	Association of Theological Schools	
American Catholic Philosophical	Association of Schools of Journalism and	.1770
Association	Mass Communication	1971
Association for Education in Journalism	Academy of Legal Studies in Business	
and Mass Communication1966	Americans for the Arts	
	New York State Mathematics Association	.1972
Western History Association		1072
Mountain-Plains Philosophical Conference1966	of Two-Year Colleges	
Society of American Archivists	College Language Association	
Southeastern Psychological Association1966	Pennsylvania Historical Association	
Southern States Communication	American Philosophical Association	
Association	American Classical League	. 19/4
American Mathematical Society1967	American Comparative Literature	1074
Association for Slavic, East European,	Association	. 19/4
and Eurasian Studies	Rocky Mountain Modern Language	1074
College Theology Society	Association	
Council on Social Work Education1967	Society of Architectural Historians	
American Association of Colleges of	American Statistical Association	
Pharmacy	American Folklore Society	
American Academy of Religion1967	Association for Asian Studies	
Association for the Sociology of Religion1967	Linguistic Society of America	
American Society of Journalism School	African Studies Association	
Administrators (now merged with the	American Institute of Biological Sciences	.1975
Association of Schools of Journalism	North American Conference on British	
and Mass Communication)1967	Studies	
John Dewey Society1967	Sixteenth-Century Society and Conference	
South Atlantic Modern Language	Texas Association of College Teachers	
Association1967	Association for Jewish Studies	. 1976
American Finance Association	Association for Spanish and Portuguese	
Association for Social Economics1967	Historical Studies	
Phi Beta Kappa Society1968	Western States Communication Association	. 1976
Society of Christian Ethics1968	Texas Association of Colleges for Teacher	
American Association of Teachers	Education	
of French1968	Metaphysical Society of America	.1977
Eastern Finance Association	American Chemical Society	.1977
American Association for Chinese Studies 1968	Texas Library Association	
American Society of Plant Biologists1968	American Society for Legal History	
University Film and Video Association1968	Iowa Higher Education Association	
American Dialect Society1968	American Physical Therapy Association	

North Central Sociological Association1980	Council of Teachers of Southeast
Dante Society of America1980	Asian Languages1994
Association for Communication	American Association of Teachers of Arabic1994
Administration1981	American Association of Teachers of
National Communication Association1981	Japanese1994
American Association of Physics Teachers1982	Academic Senate for California
Middle East Studies Association	Community Colleges1996
National Education Association1985	National Council for the Social Studies1996
American Institute of Chemists1985	Council of Academic Programs in
American Association of Teachers	Communication Sciences and Disorders 1996
of German	Association for Women in Mathematics 1997
American Association of Teachers of Italian1985	Philosophy of Time Society1998
American Association for Applied	World Communication Association
	The Historical Society
Linguistics	
American Association for Cancer Education1986	Association for Theatre in Higher Education1999
American Society of Church History1986	National Association for Ethnic Studies1999
Oral History Association	Association of Ancient Historians
Society for French Historical Studies	American Culture Association
History of Science Society	American Conference for Irish Studies1999
American Association of Pharmaceutical	Society for Philosophy in the
Scientists	Contemporary World1999
American Association for Clinical	Eastern Communication Association1999
Chemistry	Association for Canadian Studies
Council for Chemical Research1988	in the United States1999
Association for the Study of Higher	American Association for the History of
Education1988	Medicine
American Psychological Association1989	Missouri Association of Faculty Senates 2000
Association for Psychological Science1989	Association for Symbolic Logic
University and College Labor Education	American Society of Criminology2001
Association1989	American Jewish Historical Society2001
Society for Neuroscience	New England Historical Association2001
Renaissance Society of America1989	Society for the Scientific Study of Religion2001
Society of Biblical Literature1989	Society for German-American Studies2001
National Science Teachers Association 1989	Society for Historians of the Gilded Age
Medieval Academy of America1990	and Progressive Era2001
American Society of Agronomy1990	Eastern Sociological Society2001
Crop Science Society of America	Chinese Historians in the United States2001
Soil Science Society of America1990	Community College Humanities
International Society of Protistologists1990	Association
Society for Ethnomusicology1990	Immigration and Ethnic History Society2002
American Association of Physicists	Society for Early Modern Catholic Studies2002
in Medicine	Academic Senate of the California State
Animal Behavior Society	University
Illinois Community College Faculty	Agricultural History Society
Association	National Council for Accreditation
American Society for Theatre Research1990	of Teacher Education
	American Council on the Teaching
National Council of Teachers of English1991	9
Latin American Studies Association	of Foreign Languages
Society for Cinema and Media Studies1992	Society for the Study of Social Biology 2005
American Society for Eighteenth-Century	Society for the Study of Social Problems 2005
Studies 1992	Association of Black Sociologists
Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences1992	Dictionary Society of North America
American Society for Aesthetics	Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies 2005
Association for the Advancement	Society for Armenian Studies
of Baltic Studies	Society for the Advancement of
American Council of Teachers of Russian1994	Scandinavian Study2006

American Physiological Society	Chinese Language Teachers Association	2014
National Women's Studies Association 2006	Coordinating Council for Women	
National Coalition for History 2006	in History	2014
Society for Military History2006	Ecological Society of America	2014
Society for Industrial and Applied	Institute for American Religious and	
Mathematics	Philosophical Thought	2014
Association for Research on Ethnicity and	Italian American Studies Association	2014
Nationalism in the Americas 2006	Midwestern Psychological Association	2014
Society of Dance History Scholars2006	Modern Greek Studies Association	2014
Association of Literary Scholars, Critics,	National Association of Professors	
and Writers2006	of Hebrew	2014
National Council on Public History 2006	National Council of Less Commonly	
College Forum of the National Council of	Taught Languages	2014
Teachers of English	Population Association of America	2014
Society for Music Theory	Society for Italian Historical Studies	2014
Society for Historians of American	Society for Psychophysiological Research	2014
Foreign Relations2006	Society for Romanian Studies	2014
Law and Society Association	Society for Textual Scholarship	2014
Society for Applied Anthropology 2006	Society for the History of Children and	
American Society of Plant Taxonomists 2006	Youth	2014
Society for the History of Technology 2006	Society for the Psychological Study	
German Studies Association	of Social Issues	2014
Association of College and Research	Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic	
Libraries2007	Literature of the United States	2014
Czechoslovak Studies Association2007	Society of Civil War Historians	2014
American Educational Studies Association 2007	Society of Mathematical Psychology	2014
Southeastern Women's Studies Association 2009	Sociologists for Women in Society	2014
American Academy for Jewish Research2014	Urban History Association	2014
American Association for Ukrainian	World History Association	2014
Studies2014	American Educational Research	
American Association of Italian Studies2014	Association	2014
American Theatre and Drama Society2014	Labor and Working-Class History	
Central European History Society2014	Association	
Central States Communication Association2014	Paleontological Society	2014

Chinese Language Teachers Association	2014
Coordinating Council for Women	
in History	2014
Ecological Society of America	
Institute for American Religious and	
Philosophical Thought	2014
Italian American Studies Association	
Midwestern Psychological Association	2014
Modern Greek Studies Association	
National Association of Professors	
of Hebrew	2014
National Council of Less Commonly	
Taught Languages	2014
Population Association of America	
Society for Italian Historical Studies	
Society for Psychophysiological Research	
Society for Romanian Studies	
Society for Textual Scholarship	
Society for the History of Children and	
Youth	2014
Society for the Psychological Study	
of Social Issues	2014
Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic	
Literature of the United States	2014
Society of Civil War Historians	
Society of Mathematical Psychology	
Sociologists for Women in Society	
Urban History Association	
World History Association	
American Educational Research	
Association	2014
Labor and Working-Class History	011
Association	2014
7 1550 Clation	2011