

ACAD.
FREEDOM

Students for Democratic Action

BILL OF RIGHTS

For the Academic Community

A democracy cannot exist without free thought, discussion, and the opportunity to hear opposing opinions and philosophies.

The threat of totalitarianism is jeopardizing our basic liberties. This totalitarianism may manifest itself either as military imperialism, or in the guise of an economic philosophy, or as the hysterical reaction supposedly protecting us from this imperialism and/or philosophy. Totalitarianism must first control and subvert free thought before it can enslave a free people.

Freedom in our schools and universities is essential to the dissemination of different ideas and free thought. Freedom of conscience and freedom of dissent are necessary to maintain a society in which the people are sovereign.

Students for Democratic Action favors free exchange of ideas; our opposition to communism and fascism in no way qualifies this position. A spoon-fed educational program prepares American students poorly for participation in the real world of competing ideas. We are certain that totalitarian dogmas can be defeated openly and fairly without curtailment of the political liberties of the proponents.

Freedom Of Information

We oppose the censorship of books and other educational materials. Secrecy for scientific data is necessary only so far as it assures national security.

Faculty Rights

We oppose the continuation of legislative and college administrative witchhunts aimed at suppression of teachers' rights.

To demand that a professor sign either a non-communist oath or a loyalty pledge is to deprive him of his privileges as a citizen in a free society. Teachers who are often especially qualified for civil leadership should in no way be denied the opportunity to take part in off-campus political affairs. Although employment, re-hiring, and tenure of faculty members should depend primarily upon their qualifications to teach and research their particular subjects, nevertheless, a teacher who misuses his classroom or other relationships with his students to recruit agents for espionage, sabotage or other such overt criminal acts is responsible as an individual for the violation of professional principles or of the law of the land, as the case may be. Such a teacher should be dismissed, provided his guilt is established by evidence adduced in a proceeding in which he is given a full measure of due process. The holding of any political, religious, social or economic opinion should not be considered prima facie evidence of incompetence to teach. Belonging to any organization should not be, in itself, reason for dismissal. The refusal to testify before Congressional committees or judicial hearings on the grounds of the 1st or 5th amendments should not be considered, in itself, as evidence of incompetence to teach. Decisions regarding faculty tenure and the college curriculum are properly the province of the faculty, rather than of the non-academic elements which are often in control of college policy because of their financial influences. Dismissal should result only after the accused is tried publicly by his faculty colleagues, if such public trial is requested by the accused.

a body of at least an equal number of elected student representatives and academic and/or non-academic members of the school community. During the hearing, the student should be presented with the facts and should have the right to defend himself.

3. Students should have the right to full freedom of research and publication, to the promotion of full and free discussion in the classroom, to participate freely in any organization or political group of his own choice on or off campus, to speak freely on any subject that he may choose both on and off the campus, and to engage as an individual in any lawful activity off campus.

4. Students employed by colleges should have the right to form unions and bargain collectively and strike.

5. Students should have the right to petition for changes in faculty and curriculum as well as the right to petition for redress of all grievances.

Student Association Rights

6. The stated policy of a college should make it clear that students are free to organize associations for any and all political, religious, social and other purposes and that they are free to invite and hear on campus any speaker of their own choice. Student organizations may properly be required to register their organizational names, purposes, by-laws, officers and activities with the college authorities. They should not be required to disclose membership lists. Disapproval of actions of any of the organizations shall not be grounds for interference by the college, unless these organizations function in some way contrary to the rules set forth in the preceding and subsequent paragraphs. Secret societies may, of course, be prohibited or regulated.

Off-Campus Rights

7. No disciplinary action should be taken against students for engaging in activities such as campaigning for or against political candidates, picketing in labor disputes, participating in public demonstrations, etc., provided such students do not invalidly claim to be representing the college.

8. A student association should be permitted to use the name of the college and its own name in all activities held on college property. However, restrictions may justifiably be placed on the use of the college name when organization activities extend beyond the campus, but such restrictions should be administered only by the student-non-student body recommended in paragraph 1.

9. The use of college property for other than its primary purpose of instruction should be made available to any registered student organization carrying out its stated purpose in accordance with the regulations for use of college property. Such use should in no way be contingent on the purpose of a meeting. Student organizations should not be disciplined for meeting off campus. Students should be free to post publicity for their meetings.

Faculty Advisors

10. In institutions where it is thought desirable to have faculty advisors for student organizations, such advisors should be chosen by the student organizations themselves. In no case should advisors have authority to regulate or veto the activities of a student group. Student groups should not be forbidden to function because no faculty member will consent to serve as their advisor and no advisor should be held responsible for the actions of his group.

We subscribe to the rights of teachers to full academic freedom of research and publication and to the promotion of full and free discussion in the classroom. We affirm the rights of teachers to organize freely in their own interests, to join and participate freely in political groups of their own choice, to strike, to bargain collectively, and to form unions and to speak freely on any subject they may choose, both on and off campus.

We urge the A.A.U.P. and A.F.T. to redouble their efforts to increase their membership and to defend militantly the rights of their members when discharged for political affiliation or activity.

Religious Instruction

We are in favor of the constitutional guarantee of the separation of church and state. We oppose current efforts to establish sectarian religious instruction in public schools whether on "released time" or any other basis. We feel these efforts to be both a violation of academic freedom and a contradiction of the American tradition of separation of church and state. Religious services and sectarian courses offered in non-sectarian colleges should be voluntary rather than compulsory. We are in favor of courses in comparative religions and in the academic study of religion within the public school systems, but we are opposed to religious prayers in non-sectarian and publicly supported schools.

Student Rights

We view with apprehension the increase of unwarranted restrictions placed by many college administrations and state legislatures upon the rights of students to organize groups, to hold off or on-campus meetings, and to publish, sell and distribute newspapers, magazines and literature. Students are entitled to clear public statements from their college administrations concerning their rights in the above matters and should resist infringements on these rights by any groups.

We believe that the actions of many administrations and boards of trustees are unwarranted restrictions upon the rights of students to hear speakers of their own choice, restrictions which take the form of prohibitions of speakers under indictment or candidates for public office and of discussions of controversial issues. We believe that this is an unhealthy trend and must be discontinued.

We are alarmed at the increasing tendency of college administrations to apply newly-founded technical requirements and regulations in order to suspend students and organizations who subscribe to unpopular views.

We, therefore, affirm our support for the following Student Rights:

1. The policies of every college in relation to student activities outside the classroom should be set forth in definite terms, with support from the college community. The students should be informed through proper channels of any change; such changes not to be effective until after such notification and no punishment or restrictions to be ex-post-facto. To insure democratic procedures, interpretation of the precise policy should be made by a body of equal number of elected student and non-student representatives.

Individual Rights

2. No student should be expelled from nor should any student be required to withdraw from the college that he is attending, or the course he is following, for any reason other than failing to maintain an adequate scholastic average, without a fair hearing before

Press Freedom

11. College students should be permitted to publish and sell such newspapers or magazines as they wish, subject to the provisions for registering with the college authorities the name, purposes, and editors of such publications. No censorship by the college authorities should be exerted over the contents of any publication. If student editors abuse their responsibilities or fail to live up to responsibilities ordinarily accepted by the press, disciplinary action should be taken by the student-non-student body recommended in paragraph 1. However, editors should not be penalized for or limited in editorial expression of opinion.

12. Membership on the staffs of college-financed publications should be open to all students, the only criteria being journalistic ability and interest. The student or staff-elected publication board should be free to select editors without the exercise of control or influence by the college authorities or faculty. A student editor should be removable only for previously listed reasons. Removal of student editors should be under the jurisdiction of the representative body specified in paragraph 1 or carried out by the student publication board in open trial.

Student Government

13. Every college should have a system of popularly-elected student government acting as the agent for student activities and opinion. But experience has shown that freedom of organization on the campus is no safer in the hands of a student council than it is in the hands of any other person or group. Consequently, whatever regulations student government exercises over student organizations should be subject to the same safeguards as are regulations exercised by the college administration.

14. This student government shall have full rights to discuss any matter and to pass resolutions on any matter affecting students, student activities, academic freedom, etc.; and if democratically elected this student government should have the right to pass such resolutions in the name of the student body.

To implement these rights SDA Chapters should cooperate with NSA and the ACLU in making academic freedom a reality for American students and teachers.

*(Adopted by the Sixth Annual Convention of Students for
Democratic Action, University of Pennsylvania,
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