

## 2.D. The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

WSC commits itself to the tenets of academic freedom in the pursuit of teaching and learning. [State Board of Higher Education \(SBHE\) Policy 401.1: Academic Freedom](#) protects both faculty and students in their intellectual pursuits. Academic freedom is also protected by [SBHE Policy 605.1: Academic Freedom and Tenure; Academic Appointments](#), which guarantees academic freedom to those faculty who have earned tenure. Every course taught at the college has a Course Outcome Guide (COG) to assist faculty as they develop course materials; COGs are written to give each faculty member the freedom to tailor their course to their teaching style. These SBHE policies are adopted into WSC policies to maintain curiosity while permitting dissenting opinions respectfully.

WSC also upholds freedom of expression across campus. The Student Code of Conduct explains that students may organize on campus so long as they follow the rules and regulations set forth by the institution and do not disrupt regular campus operations. [WSC Policy 503.1: Student Free Speech and Expression](#) and [WSC Policy 503.3: Student Political Rights](#) also grant protection to students' freedom of expression. [WSC Policy 507: Student Publications](#) ensures freedom of expression in students' written work. [The Student Code of Conduct](#) presents guidelines for appropriate conduct in a community of scholars to maintain academic freedom and responsible conduct as American citizens and students at the college.

Restriction of academic freedom for faculty or students may initiate a grievance or appeal process. Faculty may initiate the grievance process pursuant to [WSC Procedure 612: Faculty Grievance](#), and students may initiate the academic appeal process pursuant to [WSC Procedure 514.1: Academic Appeal Procedure](#). This policy and this procedure ensure that academic freedom is preserved.

Students at WSC engage in healthy, productive debate on campus both inside and outside the classroom. Throughout the Arts & Human Sciences Department, several courses include mock debates regarding [current events](#), [American legislation](#), [philosophy](#), and [moral values](#). Each field of study offers students the opportunity to exchange ideas relevant to their futures. Furthermore, students can join [cocurricular or extracurricular activities](#) across campus to interact and debate with other students. For example, Student Senate allows students to participate in WSC's governance process while teaching them how higher education institutions operate and how policies and procedures are drafted,

approved, and amended. WSC's courses and activities provide ample opportunities for students to exchange ideas in pursuit of truth.

During Spring 2024, the SBHE split the approval of tenure recommendations for universities from those of two-year colleges and automatically approved those from the universities. However, two-year faculty packages were subject to a separate special meeting and vote. Certain board members raised concerns about giving tenure to faculty in two-year colleges: opinions ranged from “they [faculty] teach lower-level courses” to statements that these faculty do not perform research and therefore should not be eligible for tenure. In response, [the president of WSC was quoted in North Dakota newspapers for defending tenure for community college faculty](#). Similarly, [the VPAA cosigned a letter to the SBHE explaining the need for tenure and the strong support of academic freedom for community college faculty as a guarantee of students' academic freedom in learning and exploration](#). It is worth noting that the VPAA letter was endorsed by four of the five community colleges in North Dakota.

## Sources

- SBHE Policy 401.1: Academic Freedom
- SBHE Policy 605.1: Academic Freedom and Tenure; Academic Appointments
- WSC website, “Policies”
- WSC website, “Student Code of Conduct”
- WSC website, “Procedures”
- WSC website, “PHIL 215 COG.pdf”
- WSC website, “POLS 115 COG.pdf”
- WSC website, “PHIL 101 COG.pdf”
- WSC website, “PHIL 210 COG.pdf”
- WSC website, “Get Involved”
- Williston State defends tenure for 2-year faculty, compromise options suggested \*  
North Dakota Monit.pdf
- Importance of Tenure LRSC, WSC, DCB, NDSCS.docx.pdf