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Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center  
Academic Freedom Policy

PREFACE: The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) serves as the nation's largest foreign language teaching and resource center. The mission of the Institute is to develop, sustain, and evaluate military linguists throughout their professional careers and to provide language support to meet rapidly changing global language requirements. Within the context of the mission, the Institute encourages the faculty to pursue their academic interests in second language acquisition through teaching, research, and publication.

INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ACADEMIC FREEDOM AT DLIFLC:

Academic freedom at DLIFLC is based on two complementary, but slightly divergent concepts of academic freedom. Taken together these concepts embrace the intent of both the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) with its focus on the concerns of individual faculty members and the U.S. Supreme Court, with its focus on both individual and institutional concerns.

One explanation of academic freedom is expressed in the AAUP 1940 Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure. This document, rooted in a 1915 declaration by the AAUP, divides academic freedom into three parts: (1) freedom of research and publication of results; (2) freedom of classroom teaching; and (3) freedom "from institutional censorship and discipline" when the issue at hand concerns a faculty member's right to "speak or write as citizens."

The other explanation of academic freedom was first stated in 1957 by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Sweezy vs. New Hampshire*. In that ruling, the Court divided academic freedom into "the four essential freedoms of a university—to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study." In this statement, which has been referenced by the Court in subsequent rulings, the Justices established the rights of academic institutions to fulfill their missions.

These divergent concepts of academic freedom illustrate the tension that is inherent between the desire of faculty members to be free of administrative restraints and the need of the institution to accomplish its mission. This duality of competing freedoms places responsibilities on both the faculty and the institution. As MacIver points out:

For an academic community to properly function, all members of an academic community must be willing to accept both their rights as members of an academic community and their obligations and responsibilities to that academic community. (Robert MacIver, *Academic Freedom in Our Time*. New York; Columbia University Press, 1995)

The Institute's military and academic leadership believe that an open organizational climate promoting candid communication, mutual trust and confidence, teamwork, and collegiality is vital to a healthy and creative learning environment. The faculty and staff are encouraged to engage in empirical research and classroom-based experimentation to insure excellence in teaching and research. The Institute's leadership also encourages the faculty to present their findings at professional conferences and to publish in the professional literature within the foreign language discipline.

The unique mission of DLIFLC requires its graduates to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities described in the Final Learning Objectives (FLOs). Because all students must understand the range of linguistic variation and cultural diversity that exists within the language being taught, the faculty are organized into semi-autonomous teaching teams which include a range of backgrounds and specialties. These teaching teams have the responsibility to teach the core curriculum and the freedom to supplement and replace these textbook materials with materials that better meet education and training objectives and student learning styles.

**ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES:** Academic Freedom cannot exist without academic responsibilities on the part of [both] the Institute and its faculty.

The Institute's leadership realizes that the Institute is not only responsible to the students, their future employers, and the American public, but to the faculty as well. Therefore, the Institute solicits the faculty's advice on curriculum, assessment, and other academic matters through the internal organizational structure as well as through the Faculty Advisory Councils (FACs) at the school and division level and through the Academic Advisory Council (AAC) at the Institute level. The FACs are the academic fora through which the faculty provides input on school and directorate academic matters such as course content and testing, as well as input on finalists for department chair and similar positions, when the Institute fills those positions through a call for candidates. The AAC is the academic forum in which the faculty may address Institute-wide academic policies and procedures as well as provide input on finalists for dean positions when the Institute fills those positions through a call for candidates.

Professional faculty are obligated to exercise their freedoms responsibly. As recognized in both the AAUP Statement and the rulings of the Supreme Court, the exercise of academic freedom takes place within generally accepted societal norms.

For example, the Institute's Command Policy 5-93 outlines the procedures for dealing with controversial topics such as those currently imbedded in the Middle East and Bosnian conflicts. While not banning "topics of a potentially controversial nature" from the classroom and from Institute publications, the policy stipulates that "such topics be handled cautiously and carefully" and that "topics of this nature must be carefully reviewed for relevance, used selectively and judiciously, and accompanied by specific reference to external sources." Basically, extremist or controversial, sexist, racist, or religious viewpoints, if presented, should not be advocated or defended. As the guidelines stipulate,

“DLIFLC faculty members must ensure that authentic [language] materials are focused on students’ acquisition of the target language, and not on promotion of a particular viewpoint on a controversial issue. ... The DLIFLC faculty may use an array of techniques to ensure that controversial material is not treated as an expression of personal bias,” ... including “role-playing; objective analytical discussions; comparisons and contrasts of various points of view; [and should include contrasting opinions] as expressed by opposing articles or speeches.” Furthermore, in Institute publications, “controversial statements [drawn from authentic materials] should not be construed as representing the opinions of the writers, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, or the Department of Defense.”<sup>1</sup>

SUMMARY: At the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, individual academic freedom is based on an understanding of the value of free inquiry, tempered by a recognition the Institute’s unique mission and its position in American society. Therefore, the Institute’s leadership encourages the faculty to research and experiment to share their findings with others, to exercise good judgment when presenting potentially controversial topics in the classroom, and to use teaching methodologies that support the attainment of the mission-defining FLOs. Adherence to this statement will allow the Institute to accomplish its goals while allowing ample opportunities for professional expression and development of the faculty.

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<sup>1</sup> DLIFLC Command Policy 5-93, “Potentially Controversial Topics in the DLI Foreign Language Curriculum,” (20 APR 93).