

NUMBER: **1502**

TITLE: **Student Rights and Freedoms**

APPROVED: **August 12, 1971; Revised April 13, 1978**

PREAMBLE

A statement of the rights and freedoms of students in attendance at Old Dominion University is set out in this document. Such rights and freedoms will be recognized by the administration until changed or otherwise modified by the Board of Visitors as a result of study and experience.

Rights and freedoms should always be exercised within a framework of responsible behavior. They should not be used as a vehicle for division. Rather, they should serve as a point of departure from which administration, faculty, and students can work together to continue the advancement of Old Dominion University as an outstanding institution.

I. Access to Higher Education

A. Admissions

The admissions policies of the university are a matter of institutional choice. However, the university will not consider race, sex, color, age, religion, national origin, veteran status, or handicap when making admissions decisions.

B. Continuance

Continuance requirements are a matter of institutional choice. The policies for continuance shall be made clear and an orderly procedure shall be established for appeal in borderline cases and in cases showing clearly extenuating circumstances.

II. The Classroom

Instructors shall always endeavor to provide opportunities for discussion, inquiry, and expression in an atmosphere conducive to learning. Academic performance shall be evaluated solely on an academic basis.

A. Protection of Freedom of Expression

Students shall be free to take exception to the material or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study in which they are enrolled.

B. Protection Against Improper Academic Evaluations

Students shall have protection against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluations. Orderly procedures have been established (see "Grade Appeal" section of the University Catalog) through which students may appeal grades judged to have been given as result of prejudice or caprice. However, students are responsible for maintaining the standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled.

C. Protection Against Unprofessional Academic Conduct

Students shall have protection against the improper and unprofessional conduct of faculty members. Such behavior could include the following:

1. Constant failure to meet classes
2. Constant failure to be available for conferences
3. Constant failure to present relevant, in-class materials, and to test on such materials
4. Discriminatory actions in the classroom against individuals or groups

Orderly procedures have been established through which students may lodge complaints of unprofessional conduct without jeopardizing their grades.

D. Protection Against Improper Disclosure of Personal Information

Information of judgments about a student's views, abilities, or character (information faculty members acquire in the course of their work as instructors, advisors, or counselors) may be discussed by those faculty members only if such discussion is guided by standards of professional obligation. Private or confidential matters brought by a student to the attention of a faculty member should not be disclosed without the prior consent of the student.

III. **Student Records**

All student records are considered confidential and shall not be disseminated except in accordance with the guidelines described in the "Student Records Policy."

IV. **Student Affairs**

A. Freedom of Association

1. Students shall be free to organize and join associations that promote common interests.
2. Affiliations with extramural organizations shall not of themselves disqualify student organizations from institutional recognition.
3. Recognized student organizations shall not be required to have faculty advisors. If the organizations elect to have faculty advisors, their role will be to advise the organizations on the exercise of responsibility. Advisors shall not have the authority to control organizational policies.
4. Recognized student organizations shall comply with all policies established and published governing their operations. They shall not, however, be required to submit membership lists.
5. Membership in recognized student organizations shall be open to all qualified students. The university will not recognize organizations that deny membership on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, veteran status, handicap, or sex, except as permitted by law (e.g., social fraternities and sororities).
6. Honorary and professional organizations may restrict their membership on the basis of clearly established and published criteria that have been approved as part of the recognition process.
7. The facilities and services of the institution shall be open to all enrolled students through established procedures and in accordance with the university's policy on "Use of Facilities."

B. Freedom of Inquiry and Expression

1. Students and student organizations shall be free to examine and discuss all questions of interest to them. They shall be free to express opinions privately and publicly, provided such public expressions do not conflict with the Board of Visitors policy and procedures on "The University's Name and Identification."

2. In their discussion of issues and expressions of opinions, students shall be free from duress, coercion, attempts to intimidate, or attempts to otherwise persuade by use of force.
3. Student organizations shall be permitted to present speakers of their choosing. However, organizations have a responsibility to provide balanced speaker programs in accordance with the educational mission of the university. Institutional control of campus facilities shall not be used as a device of censorship, but student organizations will be required to adhere to the university's policy on "Use of Facilities."
4. The university shall not tolerate actions by individuals or groups that seek to restrict the exercise of the rights just described in sections 1 through 3.

C. Student Participation in Institutional Government

As constituents of the academic community, students shall be free, both individually and collectively, to express their views on institutional policies and on matters of general interest to the student body. The student body shall have a clearly defined means of participation in the formulation, evaluation, and administration of institutional policies in the areas of academic affairs and student affairs.

D. Student Media

1. Student media shall be free of censorship and advance approval of copy.
2. Editors and managers of student media shall be removed only for proper and stated causes, and then only by orderly and prescribed procedures. The responsibility for the removal of editors and managers shall lie with the agencies responsible for their appointments.
3. All student publications published and financed by the university shall explicitly state that the opinions expressed therein are not necessarily those of the university or the student body.
4. Students shall be free to publish, distribute, and, in accordance with university regulations, post literature on campus.
5. The university is not required to recognize or financially support any student media. The Board of Visitors may withdraw recognition and financial support from any student media at any time.

E. Financing of Student Activities

After considering student recommendations, the university shall establish orderly procedures for financing student activities. These procedures and the criteria for funding student activities will be publicized and uniformly observed. The budget for student activities shall annually be made available to the student body.

V. **Student Conduct**

The Board of Visitors has the authority to establish rules regulating student conduct and to discipline students who violate those rules. However, in the development of responsible student conduct, the use of the university's disciplinary powers should be secondary to counseling, guidance, admonition, and example. When the preferred means for developing responsible conduct fail and discipline is necessary, fair and orderly disciplinary procedures shall be established and followed so that students are protected from the unfair imposition of penalties.

A. Standards of Student Conduct

1. The University shall promulgate, with significant student participation, those standards of student conduct that it considers essential to the fulfillment of its educational mission and to the protection of its academic community.
2. University standards of student conduct shall be published and students may be disciplined only for conduct that violates those standards.

B. Investigation of Student Conduct

Students shall be free from an investigation of their conduct by the university except in accordance with the university's disciplinary policies and procedures for students.

C. Student Discipline

Students shall be disciplined only in accordance with the university's disciplinary policies and procedures for students. In all cases of student discipline, students shall be guaranteed the rights and procedural protections described in these policies and procedures.

VI. **Student's Off-Campus Conduct**

When students incur penalties prescribed by civil authorities, the university's disciplinary authority shall not be exercised so as to compound the penalties. If, however, the actions for which the students incur civil penalties are in violation of the "Code of Student Conduct," the university may discipline and penalize the students in accordance with student disciplinary policies and procedures.

