

## **ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** December 13, 2012

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION** Vice-President Academics and Research

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### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Grande Prairie Regional College values, advances, and protects the principles of academic freedom; this includes freedom of inquiry, discourse, teaching, research, and publication.

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**CROSS REFERENCE** Code of Ethics Policy  
Integrity in Research and Innovation Policy

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### **GUIDELINES**

Colleges and Universities are unique institutions that promote and protect academic freedom in order to fulfil their obligations to society. The obligations of Grande Prairie Regional College faculty members to advance knowledge are inseparable from the examination, questioning, and testing of accepted ideas and established opinion.

Academic Freedom is essential to the search for truth and for the advancement of knowledge through fostering independent thinking and expression.

The free and open pursuit of knowledge by faculty members sometimes results in differing opinions. Such differences are valued because the expression of unpopular opinions and research advances the attainment of the whole truth. Prevailing opinion is often not the whole truth.

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### **DEFINITIONS**

- 1.0 In this Policy, Faculty Member means a member of Grande Prairie Regional College Academic Staff Association as defined by any agreement between the Board of Governors of Grande Prairie Regional College and faculty members that may be in force, in the absence of a current agreement, the agreement that was last in effect.
- 2.0 All faculty members possess the benefits and responsibilities enumerated in section 5.0 of this Policy.

3.0 In this Policy, Academic Freedom is defined as a set of principles, based on values and ideals, which respect faculty members' freedoms, coupled with equally high standards of Academic Responsibility. Academic Freedom is the freedom of faculty members to teach, to conduct research, to engage in scholarly activity, to disseminate and publish results of that research, to produce and perform creative works, and to engage in service to the institution and community without being subject to undue interference.

4.0 In this Policy, Academic Responsibility includes adherence to academic policies that are created and advanced by members of the academic community as part of that community's process of academic self-government.

Academic Freedom and Academic Responsibility includes the duty to respect the rights of others, to exercise that freedom in a reasonable and responsible manner, and to respect the academic objectives of the institution.

5.0 In this Policy, Academic Freedom and Academic Responsibility includes the following areas: teaching, curriculum design and development, scholarly research and publication, institutional governance, and professional and community activities.

#### 5.1 Teaching

Academic Freedom includes the right to teach and propound academic and course subjects without fear of censure. To that end faculty members have the right to select course materials, content, methodology, and sequence of subjects in accord with existing transfer agreements and Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education course requirements and program approvals.

Faculty members are to exercise this freedom responsibly within the frameworks of course syllabi and course practices established by faculty members.

#### 5.2 Curriculum Design and Development

Faculty members, through a system of appointed or elected department, faculty/school, and College committees, have the right to participate in decision-making with respect to curriculum; new programs; new course offerings; modifications of existing courses; and degree, diploma, or certificate requirements.

Teaching and curriculum development necessarily require significant coordination and the imposition of a certain degree of structure, as well a

need for collaboration and agreement on such matters as general course content, syllabi, and examinations.

### 5.3 Research, Publication, and other Scholarly Activities

Faculty members are free in the selection of topics for research and in the publication of results and conclusions of that research.

Faculty members have the responsibility to ensure that research and scholarly activity meet scientific and ethical standards, including honest and thoughtful inquiry and rigorous analysis.

### 5.4 College Governance

Faculty members share a continuing responsibility for shaping the direction of their respective departments, programs and faculties/schools, and for serving on College-wide councils, committees, and offices. Since participation of faculty members in these areas is vital to academic governance, the College shall reciprocate with ample opportunities for faculty members' participation within these councils, committees, and offices.

Faculty members are entitled to question College procedures and policies, and to propose and to work for changes without fear of censure and undue interference.

### 5.5 Professional and Community Activities

Faculty members, as citizens and members of learned professions, have a right to personal and professional opinions, no matter how unpopular they may be, and to state these publicly without censorship or fear of harassment or reprisal.

## 6.0 Resolution of Application

6.1 In cases where College policies or practices appear to infringe upon the academic freedoms in the Policy, any affected person may apply to the Grande Prairie Regional College Vice-President Academics and Research who shall call for an *ad hoc* committee to resolve the issue.

6.2 The *ad hoc* committee shall be comprised of two members appointed by Academic Council and one member appointed by the Academic Staff Association. The Vice-President Academics and Research shall act as Chairperson. Academic Council shall appoint one faculty member and one Academic Dean.

- 6.3 Any decision of the committee shall be delivered in writing by the Chair to the Academic Staff Association, Academic Council, and the person(s) who made submissions to the committee.
- 6.4 The decision of the *ad hoc* committee is final, and there is no further appeal
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*Approved by Academic Council December 13, 2012*