

## Preamble to the Texas A&M University Faculty Code of Conduct

Codes of conduct have been widely implemented across universities and professional societies. The intent of a code is to have an agreed upon set of standards among the members of a community that both conveys expectations and protects them from unprofessional behavior within the community. Establishing a code of conduct also promotes fairness and consistency so that decisions are not left solely to administrative and/or individual discretion.

This code of conduct was developed for Texas A&M University by three faculty committees. The first, convened in Fall 2019 by the Dean of Faculties Office, had 12 members, 10 of whom were faculty.<sup>1</sup> Chaired by an associate dean of faculties, the committee developed a draft of the code, but it never moved to implementation because of leadership changes and disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. The second panel, convened in 2022 and comprised largely from members of the first committee, revisited and updated it. The third group was the Academic Freedom Task Force, convened in Fall 2023, that considered the proposed code as a needed structural change to protect academic freedom at Texas A&M University.

The Academic Freedom Task Force supported implementing a code of conduct within the university community to clarify behaviors that could be considered unprofessional in the academic context. Many University and System rules and regulations state that unprofessional behavior is grounds for sanctions, but they do not define or put parameters on the types of behaviors that can be deemed unprofessional for faculty.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the judgment of what constitutes unprofessional behavior is left to the discretion of supervisors or investigators.

To remedy this, the task force recommended implementing standards for behavior that had been developed by the academic community and proposed that the Faculty Senate be the body that oversees the code of conduct and any future updates to it. The review and decisions regarding unprofessional conduct would remain with the respective university investigative office and/or the faculty supervisor (often a department head), with appeals of any sanctions available through the Academic Freedom Council and/or the University Grievance Committee (UGC) or Committee for Academic Freedom, Responsibility, and Tenure (CAFRT).

Footnote 1. In the process of developing the Faculty Code of Conduct, the initial committee consulted codes of conduct used by professional organizations and other universities, in addition to departments colleges at Texas A&M that already had codes of conduct in place. Additionally, we considered articles on codes of conduct relevant to faculty in institutions of higher education: UC Berkeley Code of Conduct, <https://vpf.berkeley.edu/faculty-conduct>; American Academy of Religion Code of Conduct, <https://aarweb.org/AARMBR/AARMBR/Who-We-Are-/Board-of-Directors-/Board-Resolutions-/Professional-Conduct-Procedures.aspx>; Texas A&M College of Dentistry, Department of Nutrition and Food Science, Department of Performance Studies

Footnote 2. Unprofessional behavior as grounds for sanctions, up to and including termination, is stated in the following: University Rule 12.01.99.M1, sections 2.2 & 3.4.3.4.4 & 5.1 & 6.3. University SAP 12.99.99.M0.01. System policy 12.01, sections 2 & 4.3. University Rule 08.01.01.M1, University SAP 08.01.01.M1.01, University Rule 15.99.03.M1, University SAP 15.99.03.M1.03, and University SAP 15.99.99.M0.05.