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Reading: First Reading

University of Houston Student Academic Bill of Rights

Whereas, the Education Amendments of 1972 Title IX states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance..." ; and

Whereas, the University of Houston qualifies under the Educational Amendments of 1972 Title IX as an institution of education receiving Federal financial assistance; and

Whereas, the University of Houston System has acknowledged additional protections for other groups within their nondiscrimination statement: "The University of Houston provides equal treatment and opportunity to all persons without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, veteran status or sexual orientation except where such distinction is required by law..." ; and

Whereas, within the scope of UH, the current nondiscrimination statement should also be interpreted to ensure the protections of students in areas of academic endeavors; and

Whereas, University of Houston in-class and administrative procedures and practices should be clearly defined; and

Whereas, it is traditionally recognized that if a student completes assignments, attends class, participates, and performs well on tests and quizzes, then they will receive a fair grade that reflects their work; and

Whereas, owning a required textbook in a university course is not always imperative to each student's success in that course; and

Whereas, students have the right to unrestricted access to any course material which they have purchased until they choose to dispose of such material in any manner which they, as the owners of such material, see fit, and that is within the confines of any applicable law; and

Whereas, students should be guaranteed access to alternative academic resources outside the classroom such as the internet, books, tutoring help, as well as assistance from professors and/or TA's during office hours without incurring additional costs; and

Whereas, a student should have access to an appeals system to ensure academic accountability; and

Whereas, students deserve a voice in the determination, amending, and review of academic policy; and

Whereas, students should have access to their own private academic records for review.

Therefore, be it enacted by the Senate of the 44th Student Government Association of the University of Houston:

Article 1: Academic Discrimination

Section 1: Students shall feel free to peacefully express themselves even to the extent of disagreement with figures of authority without fear of reprisals. This expression includes, but is not limited to speech, actions, academic endeavors, and rights for due process, grievances, and all forms of discourse.

Section 2: The core right and privilege of freedom of religious beliefs shall be honored and protected within the University of Houston academic institution in the classrooms, recreation facilities, and resource centers.

Section 3: Students shall be held to the same standards equally without regards to status or position, ensured that all academic grading, evaluations, and mentoring opportunities are fairly based on the student's ability to perform, and that each student shall have the right to fair and reasonable treatment by other members of the university community.

Article 2: In Class Practices and Procedures

Section 1: A student shall have the right to receive a syllabus for each class at the beginning of each semester that highlights, but is not limited to: learning objectives, class expectations, required materials, grading procedures, posted professor and teaching assistant office hours and contact information, and a calendar outlining the semester.

Section 2: A student has the right to access quizzes and tests already paid for through student tuition.

Section 3: A student shall have the right to receive graded tests, quizzes, and homework assignments within a reasonable amount of time - preferably before the following test is given and quiz or homework assignment is due.

Section 4: Students shall have the right to report any unprofessional behavior witnessed or encountered by professors during enrollment in their respective classes without fear of reprisal.

Article 3: Textbook Practices and Procedures

Section 1: Students shall not be penalized nor discriminated against in any way for not personally owning a copy of a required textbook and/or any course materials for any university course.

Section 2: Students shall have the right to access class materials, for which they have paid for, at any point during the semester, and thereafter for future reference until they have disposed of such class materials in any way that they see fit and that is within the confines of any applicable law.

Section 3: Students shall have the right to seek supplemental education, and to enroll in courses that are useful in their academic growth.

Section 4: Under no circumstances shall a student be restricted from accessing university academic resources except for extenuating circumstances such as emergencies and specified holidays.

Article 4: Administrative Practices and Procedures

Section 1: The university shall make all costs involved in enrollment and completion of each course available and explicit before the earliest of: 1) active enrollment by any student in such course or 2) the first day of the term in which such course is offered.

Section 2: All professors, instructors, and teaching assistants who are involved in the instruction of a university course shall offer regularly scheduled office hours and shall be available for consultation by any student enrolled in such course at said office hours.

Section 3: Under no circumstance shall a student be required, forced, or encouraged in any way to provide any sort of compensation for time spent with any professor, instructor, or teaching assistant (collectively "*Teaching Staff*") during the Teaching Staff's regularly scheduled office hours.

Section 4: Under no circumstance should a Financial Aid award be retracted once offered to a student without conclusive and just cause established during a hearing held by a Financial Aid Hearing Committee, and during which such student is allotted time to argue his/her case.

Section 5: Students shall have access to academic advisors keenly familiar with the specific majors, minors, and any other concentrations to which they are assigned; these advisors shall be available and easily accessible to all students throughout the calendar year.

Section 6: Any academic audit which has been performed and verified by a University academic advisor shall represent a binding and complete list of all requirements that must be fulfilled for completion of the major, minor, or any other concentration for which such audit has been performed and verified.

Article 5: Academic Accountability and Appeals

Section 1: Students shall have the right to a fair and impartial appeals process regarding grades, course requirements, and/or classroom procedures.

Section 2: Students shall have the right to review and to advise changes in academic policy in an appropriate and civil manner.

Section 3: Students shall have the right to review, to inspect, and to amend their records at their request in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

Section 4: Students shall have the right to privacy of their academic records, and their information shall not be disclosed without their written consent as outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

Article 6: Student Expectations

Section 1: Students are responsible for learning the content and skills presented by the professor as required by the course.

Section 2: Students are responsible for maintaining academic honesty throughout the duration of the course, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Section 3: Students requesting modifications of the class due to medical, physical, or learning disabilities are responsible for contacting and informing the professor of such needs.

Section 4: Each student must treat other members of the University staff, faculty, and student body fairly and respectfully without prejudice, and must respect the privacy of other individuals.

Section 5: Students may only utilize university properties, including the libraries, computers, buildings, and other educational resources, in a responsible manner.

Section 6: As previously acknowledged, students have the right to freedom of expression, but to the extent that a student cannot interfere with the rights of others or halt the processes and progress of the University of Houston. Student expression should incorporate codes of good taste, accuracy, research, and legal responsibility for statements to the public.

Section 7: It is the responsibility of the student who is dissatisfied with a decision to utilize the appeals process or other existing channels, such as making recommendations to the Student Senate.

Section 8: Students should consider that any decision made in changing academic policy is carefully considered with the common good of the entire university in mind.

Section 9: University students, staff, and faculty must work in an amiable atmosphere, recognizing the difference between participation and autonomy.

Section 10: Each student is expected to adhere to the procedures and guidelines outlined in the Student Handbook and other University policies.

Article 7: Student Academic Bill of Rights Amendments

All amendments for this document must be made through the procedures outlined in the University of Houston Student Government Association Constitution.

Article 8: Distribution

This document shall be printed in the University of Houston Main Campus student handbooks.