

Criterion Two—Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Core Component 2.D.

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Ball State University's commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning is evidenced by a variety of publicly accessible statements, policies, and practices, starting with the institutional strategic plans. The university's 2007–2012 vision of being "a national model of excellence for challenging, learner-centered academic communities that advance knowledge" and its mission to provide "extraordinary access to and collaboration with professors who create scholarship to advance knowledge, improve teaching, and transform learning" place the pursuit of truth at the very heart of Ball State's teaching and learning responsibilities.

Strategic Plan 2012–2017 continues to foster these ideals as evidenced in its values statement: "We are committed to the traditional values of the academy: freedom of inquiry, imparting knowledge, and advancing the frontiers of knowledge, all for the purpose of bettering society and individuals."

Numerous programs, offices, and committees at Ball State enable and enhance inquiry by faculty, staff, and students. Examples include:

- Bracken Library
- Center for Energy Research/Education/Service
- Copyright and Intellectual Property Office
- Graduate School
- Sponsored Programs Office
- Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry

Graduate School—Ball State's Graduate School develops and monitors research requirements for graduate students, and these requirements aid in developing an environment where freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning can be realized. Ball State celebrates the distinguished achievements of its graduate students at the annual Graduate Student Recognition Reception, which honors those who have published papers, received grants, or presented at conferences. This event showcases research and teaching projects. Graduate Student Awards for Excellence in Research and Teaching are given annually, specifically for excellence in teaching and distinguished thesis and dissertation projects.

Sponsored Programs Office—The Sponsored Programs Office (SPO) provides research incentives to Ball State faculty that support their scholarly work and encourage them to pursue external funds for this work. SPO also assists faculty and graduate students in locating funding agencies to support their inquiry endeavors and provides guidance in the development of external funding. Recognition programs and awards related to the scholarly work of students, staff, and faculty include the annual Student Symposium, which provides a forum for students to share their research and creative efforts.

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Student Affairs

Ball State's Division of Student Affairs maintains statements, policies, and practices related to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. Examples include:

Student Code—Ball State's Student Code, particularly Article 1, communicates the Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, which addresses various topics relating specifically to the university's commitment to freedom and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning:

- Basic rights: speech, press, assembly, political, etc. (*Section 1.2*)
- Right to use campus facilities for political purposes (*Section 1.4.7*)
- Academic freedom (*Section 1.5*)
- Affirmation of academic freedom for students (*Section 1.5.1*)
- Specific rights for students (*Section 1.5.2*)
- Process for students raising concerns regarding academic freedom (*Section 1.5.4*)
- Free inquiry regarding research, publications, etc. (*Section 1.6.1*)
- Freedom to pursue normal activities and freedom of movement (*Section 1.6.3*)
- Obligation to not interfere with others on intellectual or public issues (*Section 1.6.4*)
- Right to hold public meetings and engage in peaceful demonstrations (*Section 1.6.6*)
- Use of Property for Expressive Activities Policy (*Appendix N*)

The complete Bill of Rights and Responsibilities is available online. The Use of Property for Expressive Activities Policy is also online.

Student Organization Handbook—Specific policies guiding students—plus faculty and staff working with students—regarding demonstrations, marches, etc., both in university buildings and outdoors are provided in Ball State's *Student Organization Handbook*. This resource addresses the processes that guide university actions to safeguard the institution's commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth as it applies to out-of-classroom activities. Specific sections demonstrating this commitment include:

- Expressive Activities Policy, taken from the Student Code, Appendix N (*pages 13–16*)
- Residence Hall Policy for Hall Solicitation/Posting/Lounge Usage, which explains housing policies for events in the campus residence halls (*pages 22–23*)
- Structures Policy (*pages 23–24*)

Distribution of Policies and Procedures to Students—While the Student Code and the *Student Organization Handbook* are available to everyone in the Ball State community via the university's website, they are also distributed to every student as a point of emphasis on the following schedule:

- Students receive an e-mail each semester with information about what the Student Code is and how they can access it on Ball State's website.
- All new students attending an orientation program receive a handbook that includes information about the Student Code and its location on the university website.
- Student groups receive a printed copy of the *Student Organization Handbook*, and it is also posted on the Office of Student Life website. Student organization presidents and advisors are invited to attend training sessions each year in which policies and procedures are described in detail.

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Academic Affairs

Ball State's Division of Academic Affairs also maintains statements, policies, and practices related to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. The *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook* includes in its Statement of Rights and Responsibilities: "A vital part of such education is the assurance of academic freedom on the campus. The trustees recognize and accept their responsibility to preserve the right of all members of the university community to examine critically the university and the society of which it is a part. The trustees further call upon the faculty, students, and administrative officials of the university to share the responsibility for maintaining an academic atmosphere on the campus which is conducive to the exploration of all issues in a rational manner as befits an institution of higher learning." Other examples include:

Curriculum Revision and Assessment Processes—Overviews of instructions and forms are provided in the following locations:

- Curriculum Creation and Revision Forms
- University Core Curriculum (UCC-21)
- UCC-21 Assessment Instructions

College-specific assessment instructions include:

- College of Sciences and Humanities
- Miller College of Business
- Teachers College
- School of Extended Education

Faculty and Staff Statements, Policies, and Practices—The Office of Research Integrity's website states: "Ball State University handles conflicts of interest, significant financial conflicts of interest, and conflicts of commitment as one program. This is done to reduce the administrative process for faculty, staff, and students." Additional guidance on other types of conflict of interest is available from specific offices and departments:

- Conflict of Interest Policy and Conflict of Commitment Policy
- Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment Policies
- Scholarships and Financial Aid Conflict of Interest Policy and Code of Conduct
- Student Legal Services Conflict of Interest Policy
- Miller College of Business Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment
- Office of University Compliance Conflict of Interest Form
- Office of Charter Schools Policy Regarding Conflict of Interest and FAQ about Conflict of Interest

Intellectual Property and Commercialization Activities—Examples of Ball State's commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning in this area include:

- Office of Commercialization: "As an entrepreneurial university, Ball State places a high priority on encouraging its faculty, staff, and students to develop innovative solutions, ideas, and products that can benefit society."

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- Intellectual Property Policy and Disclosure Form
- Ball State Innovation Corporation: “The success of an innovation isn't measured by how novel or extraordinary an idea is in itself; true success is measured by how that idea positively impacts people's lives. By providing Ball State University innovators with resources, business expertise, and guidance, we help them navigate through the commercialization process and ultimately impact society. We help innovators take ideas developed in classrooms and laboratories across the Ball State University campus and introduce them to families, workplaces, and institutions across the world.”

Professional Staff Development—Programming for university staff is continually available to further enhance Ball State’s commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. These programs are described in detail at the following web locations:

- Office of Educational Excellence
- Learning and Development Sessions
- Professional Enhancement Program

Core Component Summary

While numerous examples have been identified where the university has operationalized its commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning, the following areas are potentially problematic in fulfilling this commitment:

Assessment Statements, Policies, and Practices—These are clearly receiving increased emphasis and may warrant continual review regarding the degree to which they may negatively limit and/or reduce faculty members’ ability to effectively exercise freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. For example, University Core Curriculum (UCC-21) efforts to move toward a common rubric—and limiting ways to demonstrate competence by moving toward more universal key assessments—may narrow faculty members’ ability to be responsive to the particular learning needs of undergraduate students as they may vary from section to section of the same course. In some cases, department-level curriculum processes also may reduce flexibility to customize course syllabi, potentially reducing a faculty member’s ability to effectively exercise freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Student Evaluations and Exit Surveys—The process of arriving at the evaluative criteria placed on student evaluations and exit surveys may inadvertently limit faculty members’ ability to effectively exercise freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. For example, the development of university-wide evaluation criteria by a central body rather than at a more local, departmental, and/or program level may have negative consequences on the conditions needed to promote and nurture freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Intellectual Property Policies and Practices—These may warrant continual review regarding the degree to which they may negatively limit and/or reduce faculty members’ ability to effectively exercise freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

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iLearn Initiative—Development and delivery of online courses controlled by a centralized unit on campus may warrant continual review regarding the degree to which this centralization may negatively limit and/or reduce faculty members' ability to effectively exercise freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

It is important to emphasize that Ball State continues to give high priority to involving students in the creation and evaluation of statements, policies, and practices related to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. We also encourage the reintegration of the phrase "academic freedom" into the Higher Learning Commission's institutional integrity criterion—with all of the attending meanings—in order to fully demonstrate the university's commitment to these principles and to call attention to the essential nature of the concept in being able to ensure that freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning continue to be given the highest priority.