

Academic Freedom and Faculty Rights Committee

Report for 2011-12

Our committee usually meets in response to a request from the Consolidated Hearing Committee, asking us to evaluate an issue of academic freedom or faculty rights. We had no such requests this year. However, we did have a meeting, and we presented our work at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate.

Our records of those two meetings are attached on two separate pages.

Peter Alfeld, May 14, 2012

Academic Freedom and Faculty Rights Committee

Minutes, Meeting of February 21, 2012

The meeting lasted from 3:10-4:10pm. The following members were present: Peter Alfeld, Ray Gunn, Arthur Hartz, Donna Deyhle, Andrea McDonnell, Bruce Quaglia, Christina Gringeri, Lee Warthen.

The agenda comprised the following items:

- **Clarification of Faculty Rights.** The committee agreed that while we have a clear understanding of academic freedom, there is much less clarity about “faculty rights”. We will ask for guidance on this matter at the March 19 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate (henceforth referred to as the “ECAS meeting”). One issue raised during the discussion was that the AFFR committee is not always informed of the outcome of cases in which it was involved. There was general agreement that we should be routinely notified.

- **Revision of our charge.** We discussed the revised version of our charge. The original charge reads

Keeps informed on important issues and developments relating to academic freedom and tenure; studies problems involving academic freedom and tenure; considers alleged violations of academic freedom brought by faculty, students, and academic staff; considers other faculty grievances and, when necessary, forwards faculty grievances to the Consolidated Hearing Committee (CHC) for formal hearings; reports to the Academic Senate. See PPM 9-3 Section 11 for more details.

The current draft of the replacement reads:

The committee forms an opinion on violations of academic freedom or faculty rights when requested to do so in a specific case by the Consolidated Hearing Committee (CHC), another unit, or an individual member, of the University. The committee then prepares a written opinion, and possibly makes a recommendation, and sends these documents to the CHC, or other relevant parties. In addition the committee may be consulted by appropriate parties on the revision of pertinent University procedures.

Arthur Hartz proposed to add a phrase saying that the committee will also hear complaints on other matters from faculty. The resulting discussion had no conclusion, and led to no change of the proposed replacement, but led naturally to the next item:

- Arthur Hartz proposed that the committee work towards establishment of the office of a University **Ombudsman**. This individual would serve as a sounding board for aggrieved faculty and would attempt to resolve issues or direct faculty to the appropriate place to resolve the issue. There was a discussion of what benefits such a position would have, and what role the Ombudsman would play within the University. There was general agreement that the idea should be pursued and we will suggest such pursuit at the upcoming ECAS meeting.
- We agreed that the following points will be brought up during the upcoming **ECAS meeting**:
 - We need clarification of “faculty rights”.
 - There should be an established mechanism by which the committee is informed of the outcome of cases in which it was involved.
 - The academic Senate should consider and pursue the idea of introducing the office of a University Ombudsman.

Submitted by Peter Alfeld, February 23, 2012.

Academic Freedom and Faculty Rights Committee

Report and Requests, Executive Committee, Academic Senate

March 19, 2012

We presented the following items to the Executive Committee:

- **Revision of our charge.**

Our current charge reads

Keeps informed on important issues and developments relating to academic freedom and tenure; studies problems involving academic freedom and tenure; considers alleged violations of academic freedom brought by faculty, students, and academic staff; considers other faculty grievances and, when necessary, forwards faculty grievances to the Consolidated Hearing Committee (CHC) for formal hearings; reports to the Academic Senate. See PPM 9-3 Section 11 for more details.

We propose the following replacement which we believe is more accurate.

The committee forms an opinion on violations of academic freedom or faculty rights when requested to do so in a specific case by the Consolidated Hearing Committee (CHC), another unit, or an individual member, of the University. The committee then prepares a written opinion, and possibly makes a recommendation, and sends these documents to the CHC, or other relevant parties. In addition the committee may be consulted by appropriate parties on the revision of pertinent University procedures, or take the initiative to propose changes in University procedures.

- **Cases.** So far this year we have had one meeting, and we have not been asked for our participation in any case yet.
- **Clarification of Faculty Rights.** The committee has a clear understanding of academic freedom. However, we are much less clear about “faculty rights”. We would like some guidance on this issue.
- **Notification.** In the past we have not always been notified of decisions in cases that we were asked to participate in. We believe that there should be a mechanism by which we are routinely informed of the final decision in all such cases.
- **Ombudsman.** The committee recommends that the University explore the establishment of an office of **University Ombudsman**. A more detailed proposal will be provided in a separate document.

At the end of the presentation we were assured by the Executive Committee that these issues would be pursued by the appropriate committees and individuals.