

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM (UCAF)

2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE:

The University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF) met three times in Academic Year 2014-2015 to conduct business with respect to its duties as outlined in Senate Bylaw 130. Highlights of the Committee's activities and accomplishments are noted in this report.

Learning Assessments, Accreditation, and Encroachment on Faculty Autonomy

Continuing an issue from last year, UCAF expressed concerns that some requirements imposed by various accreditation bodies have the potential to encroach on the academic freedom of UC faculty. Although attempts to standardize the curriculum should be avoided, members agreed that UC faculty should engage with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology and other accrediting bodies to educate them about the University and to be more interactive in the process at their campuses. It was also proposed that UCAF members reach out to the local committees on undergraduate education and consider giving their local CAF a leading role in reviewing measures, including learning assessments, which might impact faculty control over their curriculum.

Chancellors' Welcoming Letters and "Campus of Civility"

The Chancellors have been encouraged by the Office of the President to make beginning-of-the-year civility statements. At its December meeting, UCAF members agreed to draft a general statement of academic freedom and civility that the divisional offices could issue on an annual basis along with the Chancellors' civility statements. With assistance from UCAF members, Chair Montgomery took the lead on drafting the civility statement. At UCAF's March meeting, members indicated unanimous support for adopting and forwarding the statement to Council. On April 1st, Academic Council reviewed the statement on civility submitted by UCAF and approved it with some minor revisions. The Academic Council Statement on Academic Freedom and Civility has been posted on the UCAF website and circulated to Chairs of Senate Divisions for distribution and posting on CAF websites.

External Evaluation Letters for Advancement to Professor Step VI

UCAF discussed concerns related to academic freedom issues and evaluation letters at Step VI and the members gathered information about the practice at their campuses. Three campuses (UCB, UCSD, and UCD) no longer require external letters for advancement to Professor Step VI, whereas the other campuses maintain this requirement. The UCD and UCSD changes are recent and have been initiated and/or endorsed by the Senate, while the change of policy at UCB is several years old. Members expressed concern regarding who has the discretion to solicit letters on the three campuses where they are not required and agreed that faculty candidates themselves should also be given the right to have extramural letters included in their advancement file. Members agreed that UCAF should draft a letter to UCAP expressing these concerns and asking that UCAP consider this matter.

UCAF requested that UCAP consider whether CAPs had seen any evidence of problems or potential problems in Step VI reviews on campuses where extramural letters are optional. UCAP advised UCAF that the APM nowhere specifies that chairs must solicit external letters of evaluation in Step VI reviews. Furthermore, UCAP found no specific reference in the APM to academic freedom as the rationale for extramural letters. Rather, the APM indicates that extramural letters are intended to ensure a fair, thorough, and objective review. UCAP agreed with UCAF that a candidate should have the right to request that the chair solicit extramural evaluation letters in Step VI cases; if the chair were to deny this request, the candidate could note that fact in her or his response to the departmental review. UCAP did

not agree, however, that candidates should have the right to *require* such letters. Within the department, UCAP noted, the authority for soliciting extramural evaluation letters is explicitly reserved to the chair.

Openness In Research

At its April meeting, UCAF was joined by Wendy Streitz, Executive Director, Research Policy Analysis and Coordination, Office of Graduate Studies and Research (OGSR), who was seeking feedback on an early draft of a change in policy on openness in research. This involves modifications in existing policy, which currently disallows funders to place publication or citizenship restrictions on use of funds. Existing policies related to this issue are hard to find, and some circumstances have arisen that were not contemplated when the old policies were written. A group that includes vice chancellors for research felt that UC should have a new clear and consistent policy, and a workgroup involving VCRs developed the proposed policy.

Members of UCAF requested data that would show the extent to which the current UC principle of fundamental research, which does not accept restrictions on publication and citizenship, has interfered with faculty engaged in certain kinds of research. UCAF noted that publication and citizenship restrictions are different issues, and members suggested that OGSR may want to consider creating two separate policies. During the coming year, UCAF will anticipate reviewing the next draft resulting from OGSR's consultations and will send more formal feedback at that time.

Anti-GMO Lobbyists and Academic Freedom

The committee had a brief discussion about Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests affecting faculty who have worked on GMO-related issues. The policy formulated at UCLA as guidance for faculty facing FOIA requests was circulated to the members. Members were advised to inquire about this issue on their campuses and to update the committee in the upcoming year.

Other Issues and Additional Business

In response to requests for formal comment from the Academic Council, UCAF also issued views on the following:

- UC Policy on Copyright and Fair Use
- APM 210.1.d
- Proposed Revised Presidential Policy–Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

Finally, UCAF devoted part of each regular meeting to reports on issues facing local committees.

Respectfully submitted,

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