

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Minutes of Meeting

Thursday, November 30, 2023

I. Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Action Taken: *The agenda and minutes were approved as noticed, 9-0-0.*

II. Consultation with the Academic Senate Leadership

James Steintrager, Academic Senate Chair

Steven Cheung, Academic Senate Vice Chair

The Senate Chair remarked that a lot of consternation was expressed at the recent Regents' meeting related to campus activities related to the Middle East conflict. There is a renewed interest in statements on departmental websites. Chair Steintrager said that he voiced support for academic freedom in his [remarks to the Regents](#), and that he mentioned the recommendations that were developed by the Senate last summer regarding statements on departmental websites. The Regents are very interested in re-visiting that topic. There will be workgroup on this item, and the Senate Chair likely will be a part of it; it is unclear at this time how formal the workgroup will be. Chair Steintrager mentioned to the Chair of the Board that the Chair of UCAF would be a welcome addition to that group. The committee discussed the relationship between the Regents and department website statements at length.

Chair Steintrager raised the issue of [comments \(and subsequent clarification\) made by President Drake](#) with regard to "viewpoint neutrality." Approximately 150 UC historians wrote a [letter](#) that appeared in *Inside Higher Education* in response to President Drake's comments. The Senate Chair asked the committee for its thoughts on the President's remarks. Members responded with their observations.

III. Chair's Report

Chair Farrell Ackerman

- Update about request for additional meetings

The Chair remarked that the request for additional meetings was largely rebuffed with the allowance of one additional UCAF meeting during the 2023-24 academic year.

IV. Draft Letter on Proposed Revisions to Academic Senate Bylaw 55 (Departmental Voting Rights)

Chair Ackerman stated that this was a challenging letter to write, and he did his best to capture the animated discussion UCAF had on this topic.

Members discussed the committee's response to Council, including viewpoints that differed from the tenor of the letter drafted.

V. Topics for 2023-24

Should UCAF be a Council Committee – What are the procedures for inclusion on Academic Council?

Chair Ackerman told the committee that he and the Vice Chair had a background conversation with former Council Chair Jim Chalfant, who made some recommendations about how to move this effort forward. The UCAF Chair and Vice Chair also have been reviewing the 2009 rejection letter from Council to glean some insight into what approach the committee should take (and should not take) regarding this appeal. The rejection in 2009 was by a vote of 19-1, but the Chair and Vice Chair feel that UCAF has a stronger argument for inclusion on Council at this time and that there is some interest on the part of the Divisional chairs for including UCAF on Council. UCAF will need to have compelling arguments showing how it can contribute to Council. Part of the effort needed will be to look at the last two years of Council discussions and identify areas where UCAF could have weighed in significantly. Chair Ackerman suggested that it would be helpful if all the local campuses made an effort to get their CAFs onto their local councils. Those campuses do not have independent CAFs could argue that they need to have an independent committee.

The committee discussed this issue at length.

VI. Campus Reports

Members reported on campus-specific issues concerning academic freedom.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.