

## **UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM (UCAF)**

### **2013-2014 ANNUAL REPORT**

#### **TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE:**

The University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF) met once in Academic Year 2013-2014 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.

#### **Faculty Control of the Curriculum**

UCAF discussed faculty control of the curriculum specifically as it related to the accreditation process at UC Merced. UCAF members agreed to send a letter to the Chair of the UC Merced Academic Council about the potential erosion of faculty control of the educational curriculum and accompanying threats to academic freedom. The committee asserts that potential risks to academic freedom and faculty control of the curriculum may be a consequence of implementation of the programs designed to respond to WASC's criteria. The memo cited concerns about requirements that could have the unintended consequence of discouraging faculty members from offering courses that challenge or interrogate the foundations of their discipline. In light of the growing role of learning assessment and its related bureaucracy at various UC campuses, UCAF wished to reiterate that faculty control of the curriculum and academic freedom are not only crucial elements of shared governance, but also the cornerstones of the UC's educational excellence at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

In the memo, the committee cautioned that UC must be wary of one-size-fits-all schemes that seek to standardize or routinize the way in which faculty educate UC students, whether imposed internally or externally by WASC. In order to ensure that UC's strengths as a research university and its commitment to academic freedom continue to inform the education it delivers to its students, UCAF urged that local senate Academic Freedom committees be given the opportunity to assume a leading role in reviewing any measures, including learning assessment, that might potentially affect faculty control over the curriculum or the rights of individual faculty members to design and teach courses in their area of specialty. To date, UCAF has not received a response from the UC Merced Senate Chair.

#### **Moreno Report**

In 2012, UCLA's Chancellor asked former California Supreme Court Justice Carlos Moreno to chair an external panel of academic and community members to review incidents of racial and ethnic bias and discrimination experienced by faculty. The review, which was launched after Chancellor Gene D. Block was approached by a group of concerned faculty, found that university policies regarding racial bias and discrimination were vague and insufficient. It found that the university's procedures for addressing such complaints were practically nonexistent and that the university had "failed to adequately record, investigate, or provide for disciplinary sanctions for incidents which, if substantiated, would constitute violations of university nondiscrimination policy." UCLA faculty members and administrators served on the Moreno Report Implementation Committee which was established as a response to the report's important recommendations. In the coming year, UCAF anticipates reviewing the proposed response to the report and will identify and call attention to any problems related to academic freedom.

#### **Toolkit for Public Records Act/Freedom of Information Act Requests**

A committee at UCLA was charged with developing a "toolkit" for faculty and administrators who received Public Records Act (PRA) or Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. During its March 2013 meeting, UCAF reviewed a draft of the documents this committee had prepared and in February 2014 members were asked to distribute the finalized packet of materials to relevant and interested parties at their campuses.

At its April 2 meeting, the Academic Council was briefed on the toolkit and agreed that the documents would be helpful to faculty on all campuses who face requests for information about their research that sometimes ask for documents and other material that faculty have assumed could remain confidential. Council agreed to help disseminate these materials to the divisions. The materials in the toolkit are also available as links on the UCLA Academic Personnel Office website:

Faculty Resource Guide for California Public Records Request

<https://www.apo.ucla.edu/resources/recordrequest>

Statement on the Principles of Scholarly Research and Public Records Requests

<https://www.apo.ucla.edu/resources/academic-freedom>

### **Animal Rights Extremists and Research at UC**

For the past several years, UCAF has discussed the issue of violent attacks against UC researchers. In April 2012, UCAF's "[Statement in Support of Faculty Harassed by Opponents of their Research](#)" was endorsed by the Academic Council and subsequently forwarded to former UC President Yudof. In spite of statements of support for those who use animals in biological research, it is clear that these statements have not had much impact. The arrival of President Napolitano prompted UCAF to renew its effort to get the central administration of the University engaged in this matter on an ongoing basis. In May, UCAF forwarded to Academic Senate Chair Jacob a report developed by a UCLA task force in 2006 that contains a series of recommendations for confronting animal extremism which UCAF members feel provide an excellent basis on which future plans for action could be developed. UCAF takes the firm stance that no faculty should face this burden without the full support of the university and their peers. However, to date, no further progress has been made on this matter.

### **Other Issues and Additional Business**

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

- APM 035

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

Respectfully submitted,

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