

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

ACADEMIC SENATE

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

VIDEOCONFERENCE MINUTES

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2020

Attending: Sarah Schneewind, Chair (UCSD), Brian Soucek, Vice Chair (UCD), Ty Alper (UCB), Benjamin Highton (UCD), Mei Zhan (UCI), Moira Inkelas (UCLA), Devra Weber (UCR), Stella Bialous (UCSF), Leda Cosmides (UCSB), Jessica Taft (UCSC), Valeria Orue (Graduate Student Representative, UCR), Frances Osran (Undergraduate Student Representative, UCB), Brenda Abrams (Principal Policy Analyst, Academic Senate)

I. Threats from the People's Republic of China

- *Ramesh Balasubramaniam, Chair, CCGA*

Chair Schneewind joined a recent meeting of the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) to discuss concerns about threats from the People's Republic of China. Chair Balasubramaniam shared that CCGA received a presentation from Human Rights Watch (HRW) about the unsettling events happening in US classrooms, including at UC campuses. HRW reported that Chinese students who have spoken in class have reported that their families in China were subsequently visited by the Party. These incidents are probably more widespread than is known but what is happening is an assault on academic freedom. CCGA is concerned about students' ability to speak in class and express their views. HRW did not provide additional details but has offered to meet with CCGA again.

Discussion: Members have not heard about any reports about students at their campuses having problems but this situation needs to be addressed. Some faculty have been told in private by Chinese students that they do not want to speak in class and feel they are being watched. Chair Schneewind did not find any data on that particular issue on UC campuses in the HRW information. But she has reviewed information about the Confucius Institute, which in some places operates as an arm of the propaganda machine of the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the U.S. There are three Confucius Institutes in the UC system, and Chair Schneewind spoke to two representatives who do not think there is a problem. The representatives indicated that if they push back on a request from the PRC, the PRC not press the matter. The Institutes do need to be educated about academic freedom issues. Confucius Institutes at other universities have been shown to have intervened improperly in matters such as faculty hires, and in some places have been shut down.

Chair Schneewind also met with the leaders of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association at UCSD and they said that this group is not involved with politics. A CAF representative might meet with this organization annually. A member of CCGA had noted that students from Arab countries have long expressed concerns about being watched, and another suggested that students who were concerned about safety should be encouraged to meet privately with faculty, or could be paired up with students who are unconcerned about speaking in class; or faculty might be encouraged to utilize more written assignments or to lower expectations for class participation. It is important to recognize that students' self-censorship is a part of the problem. Fear will silence students and there are limits to what UC can do. Chancellors could make a statement that UC is a place for open, active discussion and encourage concerned students to talk about this issue.

II. Consent Calendar

Action: UCAF's December 10, 2019 videoconference minutes were approved.

III. Announcements

Chair Schneewind had considered proposing that a newsletter on current academic freedom issues be issued every year to stimulate conversation at the campuses; Abrams had found that the newsletter could be posted on UCAF's website with the clarification that it reflects the committee's view and is not endorsed by Council. Another strategy is for each CAF to issue annual statements on current threats to disseminate through divisional Council, CAF websites or town halls. But these measures will not suffice. Wide education and a mechanism for enforcement are required.

Chair Schneewind has circulated a document about providing education about academic freedom. This document can serve as a basis for discussion with small groups of students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Departments/units could be encouraged to have short discussion about the academic freedom document on an annual basis. Chair Schneewind reported that she had met with faculty at UCSD interested in pedagogy who suggested incorporating statements on academic freedom into classroom codes of conduct and on the syllabi. UCAF could provide a model statement similar to the one about academic integrity which teachers could revise as desired. Across the UC, standard procedures and mechanisms are needed for faculty who want to report academic freedom violations. Currently, faculty can complain to campus CAFs but the CAF is powerless. UCSD has an office that handles prevention of harassment and discrimination and the staff understand the issues, so this could be a central place for tracking and addressing academic freedom issues. Divisions should consider changing appointments to UCAF to two or three year terms.

The national organization Scholars At Risk (SAR) contacted the chair about running a pilot project on a UC campus to provide education on academic freedom. UCAF members have indicated their support of this partnership. SAR will apply for the grant to start a pilot at one campus with goal of eventually including more campuses.

Discussion: The website for UCSC's CAF indicates that complaints can be brought to the committee, but this has only occurred once in the past three years and UCLA's CAF primarily deals with policy. Each campus has an ombudsman who knows about available resources and UCAF members might ask about the office's involvement with academic freedom complaints. Members will share the draft statement on education to relevant committees at their campuses and the statement should be transmitted to divisional Councils to request administrative support for the activities. The statement from UCAF will be sent to systemwide Council to be submitted to the Office of the President. Routing the statements through divisional and systemwide Senate channels is the best way to reach all UC faculty. The statement may foster engagement by faculty and raise awareness of academic freedom issues and resources.

IV. Consultation with the Academic Senate Office

- *Mary Gauvain, Vice Chair, Academic Senate*

The committee was joined by Vice Chair Gauvain, who gave an overview of her background. Council received a presentation on a proposed policy on "Openness in Academic Research" which responds to restrictions from the federal government on who can be involved with research projects. The Standardized Testing Task Force's report and recommendations will be discussed by Council in April and the matter will be decided by the Regents in May. The presidential search is ongoing and the Senate's Academic Advisory Committee is providing input. The new president may be announced in May. The proposed bond for capital improvements did not pass. The graduate student strike at UCSC is being discussed by several systemwide committees right now.

Discussion: Reportedly, UCSC's administration sent undergraduate students a form to use to report any changes to syllabi or instruction, including cessation of instruction. UCSC's CAF and Senate passed a resolution about this action, which promoted a culture of surveillance related to what faculty can and

cannot do and proposed rules about changing syllabi. The resolution noted that the administration should explain how the information would be used. In addition, graduate students who moved grades from the Canvas learning management system (LMS) to a different storage system were issued student conduct summons for this action, which the UCSC Senate believes is another violation of academic freedom. UCAF discussed issues related to grading and student access to their grades and the use of an LMS.

V. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statements in UC's Hiring of Faculty

- *Ben Highton, UCD*

At UCD, job applicants are being asked to include Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statements (DEIs). The DEIs have been added to the current campus hiring process and various units are asking for guidance on how to evaluate them. Some UCD faculty think the DEIs are or could be used as a political test and could interfere with faculty and departmental control over who is or is not hired. UCD's rubric for evaluating the DEIs suggests there is a requirement that faculty or search committees adopt a view of diversity that is one particular philosophical approach to the exclusion of others. The CAF was asked to comment on a Senate resolution banning the statements. The statements are being used, evaluated and collated with other information differently at each campus.

Discussion: The committee had a lengthy discussion about why the DEIs can be problematic. Job applicants may not be provided with enough information about the purpose of the statements or they might claim to hold views they do not. Chair Schneewind will draft a memo to Council outlining UCAF's concerns about the DEIs and CAFs should discuss this matter.

V. Standard Procedures for Violations of Academic Freedom

This was discussed during the Chair's Updates.

VI. Systemwide Review Items

Having already opined, the committee did not discuss the report and recommendations of the Academic Council Standardized Testing Task Force and the proposal from the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools to eliminate the SAT Essay/ACT Writing Test requirement for undergraduate admission.

VII. Campus Reports/Members Items

There were no Campus Reports.

VIII. New Business

There was no New Business

IX. Executive Session

UCAF did not hold Executive Session.

Videoconference adjourned at: 12:15 PM

Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams

Attest: Sarah Schneewind