

AY15-16 Annual Report: Faculty Standards Committee
May 2016

Membership: Jc Beall (Chair), Sandra Bellini, Pam Bramble, Jack Clausen, Dipak Dey, Maria-Luz Fernandez, Michael Fischl, Elizabeth Jockusch, Dustin Lavoie, Del Siegle, Mei Wei, Lisa Werkmeister-Rozas, Susanne Yelin, Preston Britner, Gerald Gianutsos, Masha Gordina (Fall '15), Doni Ivanov, Shariq Mohammed, Girish Punj, Sally Reis, Thulasi Kumar, Osundwa Wanjera

Major Items of Discussion.

Charge on Academic Freedom: the FSC received a charge to formulate a concise definition of academic freedom. The charge presupposed that there was no “clear and compelling” such account in University By-Laws, but this presupposition failed (e.g., Article IV Sect B fits the bill). For reasons set out in its report on the charge (available in FSC minutes at senate.uconn.edu) the FSC judged it best not to alter current language on academic freedom.

Charge on Conditions for Teaching Performance: the FSC received a charge concerning avenues for improving teaching performance when teaching performance is below a set standard. Towards meeting the charge the FSC produced a report that raised and answered a number of relevant questions. (See ‘Report on Seeking Assistance on Improving Teaching’, available in FSC minutes at senate.uconn.edu.)

Charge on Civility and Free Speech: the FSC was given a charge to write a UConn statement on free speech and civility. The FSC advanced the following recommendation:

Recommendation: The role of free speech and civility at UConn is a pressing, important, and highly complex issue. The FSC worked diligently to review and discuss existing policy statements and practices -- at the University and around the country -- that attempt to protect free speech, promote civil discourse, and nurture a culture of inclusiveness and mutual respect even when there is profound and fundamental disagreement among members of a community.

Given the complexity of the issues, we recommend opportunities for broader input and discussions across the University’s many and diverse citizens. The FSC strongly supports the creation of a UConn statement on free speech and civility. The aim should be a clear and timely statement, one that marks out the values to which UConn is committed.

Other Items of Discussion.

- *Administrators (viz., Assoc Deans) on Senate:* The FSC received a discussion item from the SEC concerning the ratio of administrators on the Senate (viz., 1:9) versus that of faculty (viz., 1:30).

Response. The FSC discussed the possibility of changing by-laws so as to include Deans and Associate Deans in one constituency. The FSC asked the SEC for further clarification on the proposed by-law change. The matter remains with the SEC as of May 2016.

- *Suspension of Senate Rule that SETs shall be calculated only in classes of five or more students:* Dean D'Alleva (Fine Arts) requested a suspension of the given rule because small classes in fine arts are not being evaluated and instructors' teaching portfolios are thereby suffering.

Response. The FSC discussed the request. Conclusion: for reasons of statistical validity and especially confidentiality the FSC saw no way to support the motion to change said by-laws. Alternative means of assessment were strongly recommended for relevant teaching portfolios.

Informational Items.

- Sponsored the annual PTR Forum on April 1. Special thanks to Cheryl Galli for logistical support and a report on the forum. Special thanks to Mark Boyer for his role in the forum this year.