



FACULTY SENATE

Research, Scholarship & the Creative Arts Committee

May 13, 2021

12:30-2:00

Microsoft Teams

Present: Mildred Beltre (CAS, Fine Arts Rep), Brandon Bensel (Postdoctoral Association), Vicki Brennan (CAS), Christopher Burns (Faculty Senate President), Mary Cushman (LCOM), Katie Gough (CAS), Rachelle Gould (RSENR), Britt Holmén (CEMS), Micah Hundley (GSS), Dimitry Kremontsov (CNHS), Christie Silkotch (LIB), Daniel Weiss (LCOM), Chun Zhang (GSB)

Absent: Tammy Kolbe (CESS), Jill Preston* (CALs), Vacant (SGA)

Guests: Bryn Geffert,

Chair Cushman called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm via Microsoft Teams.

- 1. Approval of the Minutes.** The minutes of April 2021 were approved as written.
- 2. Academic Freedom Policy.** The committee discussed and voted on the final version of the Academic Freedom Policy.

103 Academic Freedom

The Faculty Senate adopted the following statement on academic freedom on September 23, 1954 and was approved by the Board of Trustees on October 16, 1954 and revised and adopted by the Faculty Senate on November 20, 2008 and approved by the Board of Trustees on February 7, 2009:

Academic Freedom and Responsibility

We, the faculty of The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, in the spirit and tradition of free universities throughout the world, are agreed upon the following statement of principles on academic freedom and responsibility. We believe that incorporation of these principles into the organization of The University of Vermont and State Agricultural

College will re-emphasize the importance of academic freedom to the basic health of the University, and also serve as a statement of policy on the rights and responsibilities of faculty members at this institution. It has been our intent to state these principles in terms broad enough so that they may be valid not only in these critical times when academic freedom and personal liberty are in jeopardy both at home and abroad, but also in the future insofar as the future can be foreseen.

The Necessity of Academic Freedom in Higher Education

The main purpose of a university has always been, must always be, to stimulate the thinking and the creative powers of its students and its faculty. As an institution it deals in ideas, not only old and accepted ones but new ones that may be full of explosive power. If they are explosive, they are bound to be disconcerting, even painful, to some on the campus and to many beyond its borders. Inevitably they will be called dangerous by the timid and short-sighted, but to those who really believe in the fruitfulness of human thought, the real danger would appear only if the flow of such ideas should cease. For then indeed sterility would have taken over our campus. Our faculty would no longer deserve the name of intellectuals and our students, regardless of degrees attained, could no longer claim to be educated. They would leave our campus accustomed only to the commonplace, satisfied with the mediocre, ignorant or afraid of ideas which catch fire. Academic freedom is therefore not solely a right or privilege of the faculty but is the fulfillment of the obligation on the part of the university to provide an atmosphere in which intellectual growth may take place.

Academic Freedom and Special Responsibilities of Faculty Members

We subscribe to the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and the 1970 Interpretive Comments of the American Association of University Professors which provides:

- a. Faculty are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the university.
- b. Faculty are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. The intent of this statement is not to discourage what is "controversial." Controversy is at the heart of the free academic inquiry which the entire statement is designed to foster. Instruction may occur in an atmosphere of controversy so long as what is taught is placed in an appropriate context, and assists students in mastering or appreciating the significance of the subject.
- c. Faculty are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of the university. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the university.

We also subscribe to the 2014 report of the American Association of University Professors on Academic Freedom and Electronic Communication which provides:

- a. Academic freedom, free inquiry, and freedom of expression within the academic community may be limited to no greater extent in electronic format than they are in print, save for the most unusual situation where the very nature of the medium itself might warrant unusual restrictions.

In addition, there are recognized qualifications which must be attained and maintained before the privilege of being a member of the academic profession can be considered a permanent one: satisfactory performance as a teacher, scholarship, and high moral standards.

Responsibility of the Institution to the Faculty

The University must defend tenaciously the right of its members to think and express their thoughts freely and to make those choices within the law guaranteed to every citizen. This includes the right of dissent since any democratic institution ceases to merit the name democratic when this fundamental right is denied. Never is this duty more imperative than in those unhappy times when the public opinion of the community would restrain or curtail the free play of ideas. The universities, whose roots extend back into the centuries, have a tradition and duty to maintain an independence of judgment in the face of public opinion.

Academic Freedom and Tenure

Tenure is an indispensable pre-condition for academic freedom. It is, in fact, a guarantee that the institution subscribes to the principle of academic freedom, and that its members may not be dismissed without adequate cause. Termination of tenure should occur only in cases of bona fide financial exigency in the University or when it has been demonstrated that the teacher lacks professional or moral fitness or competence as a teacher.

In the interpretation and the application of these principles we shall expect the University authorities to be quick to protect its heritage of academic freedom, in doubtful cases remembering that an excess of freedom is always less dangerous than an excess of constraint.

Motion: Britt Holmén moved to approve the proposed Academic Freedom Policy, Christie Silkotch seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Academic Freedom Proposal will move on to the Faculty Senate for a vote in the Fall.

3. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force. Mary encouraged a member of the RSCA to represent the senate on this task force if they are able.

4. Libraries Update, Bryn Geffert.

- **Elsevier Update.** Science Direct contract ran out in December. UVM did not renew the contract due to the high cost. They have used their resources in a variety of ways to help support the campus. They have created more staff positions and continue to look at ways to offer the best service to the community. The committee would like to have Dean Geffert back in the fall for an update.
- **Open Access Fees.** Could the Libraries use some of the savings to help offset of these costs? For the time being, they do not have extra funding to do this. These funds have been

reallocated due to the budget crisis; however, they may be returned to the libraries in the future.

5. The Humanities and the Library.

Howe Library & Humanities & Creative Arts Research (H/CA):

- Howe Library resources are limited for most H/CA researchers, particularly for faculty who work with non-English sources or other specialized materials. Thus, H/CA faculty research often requires travel to archives, libraries and other sites.
- We do not have a "research library" for the Humanities and Creative Arts; instead, we have an undergraduate-focused collection. ILL is very much required to help facilitate research in the Humanities. There is a need for continued resources devoted to ILL as well as the purchase of manuscripts to support Humanities research.
- Howe Library does not currently have a Humanities Librarian (Pat Mardeusz retired in December 2020) nor are there plans to hire one.
- Limited availability of spaces and advanced (digital?) - technology tools on campus to facilitate H/CA faculty research.

Possible Actions to Increase Research Facilities Support for Humanities Scholars:

- a. Increase library and research technology resources available to H/CA faculty. Prioritize the hiring of a Humanities research librarian.
- b. Work with *Humanities Center* to create a new Research Support Network/Hub for making available funding, resources, technologies, etc. so that scholars can share ideas and information across disciplines and other institutional divisions. This would include a full-time administrative staff person to facilitate links between library, SPA, OVPR, and the Office of Engagement among other offices.
- c. Invest in creation of a "Creative Scholars Lab" to provide faculty (and potential graduate students) the needed resources to successfully carry out their research. This could include: high powered scanners, monitors, recording equipment, media conversion, or other equipment used in document preservation and to organize materials. There should be opportunities for scholars to learn about and train on new tools and technologies for organizing, preserving and otherwise working with research materials.

The committee agreed that it would be beneficial to send Jim Vigoreaux a letter in support of the libraries and their need for library faculty that support the humanities.

The committee would like to start conversations between the Humanities Center, the VP of Research and the Libraries. The VP of Research is interested in providing support of STEM / Humanities collaboration, once the RSCA provides participants his office will schedule a meeting. The RSCA talked about an informal conversation before meeting the Faculty Senate Office will help facilitate.

6. Old or New Business.

- Mary thanked Britt, Tammy and Katie for their service on the RSCA.
- Mildred and Mary will co-chair the RSCA next year.
- Researchers from authoritative regimes as a topic for 2022/2022

- Please send Mary and ideas for topics of discussions for next year.

7. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 2:10 pm.

*Sabbatical

The next meeting of the RSCA will take place on Thursday, September 9th at 12:30 on Microsoft Teams.