SENATE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Annual Report for 2013-2014

(Informational)

University policy HR76 “Faculty Rights and Responsibilities” establishes the scope of the Senate Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities. Petitions may be filed by faculty on the grounds of violations of academic freedom, procedural fairness, or professional ethics. Other avenues for resolution should be pursued before filing a petition including working with the college, campus or university ombudsperson.

The committee received four petitions between July 2013 and June 2014. In addition, one petition received at the end of June 2014 was carried forward for review by the 2014-2015 committee. This is a smaller number of petitions than has been seen in recent years (eight petitions in 2012-2013, eight petitions in 2011-2012, eight in 2010-2011, and nine in 2009-2010).

All four of this year’s petitions alleged procedural unfairness related to tenure and/or promotion reviews. The committee found sufficient evidence in all four of the petitions to investigate. Two of the petitions also claimed unfairness based on discrimination and in those cases the petitions were forwarded to the Office of Affirmative Action for a parallel review, as specified in HR76.

The committee found procedural unfairness in the tenure review process of one petitioner and recommended a remedy to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. The Vice Provost and Interim Provost accepted the committee’s recommendation and directed the relevant administrator to implement the remedy.

A second petition claimed procedural error in promotion to full professor. Upon investigation, the committee found evidence of procedural unfairness and recommended a remedy to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. Because the results of this review were concluded very recently it is not known if the Vice Provost will accept the recommendations of the committee.

For one petition claims of procedural fairness, breach of contract, and breach of protocol were investigated. Claims of breach of contract are not within the purview of the committee and were not taken up. The claim of procedural unfairness was investigated and was found to be without merit.

The final petition claimed irregularities during tenure evaluation, and racial discrimination. The petition was referred to the Office of Affirmative Action to investigate the claims of racial discrimination. After investigation, the Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities found no evidence of procedural unfairness in the tenure review.

The Committee on Rights and Responsibilities provides an important service to the University as faculty members and administrators work together to make decisions on the most important and sensitive matters. It is labor intensive and requires the thoughtful consideration of each petition and careful deliberation on potential remedies, and the chair would like to thank all of the
members of this year’s committee for their effort. We would like to thank the ombudspersons of the University for resolving many conflicts and disputes in the colleges and campuses. We would like to thank Blannie Bowen, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, for working with the committee to improve awareness of the policies and procedures related to promotion and tenure and in that way reduce the number of complaints to the committee.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (2013-2014)
- Mohamad A. Ansari
- Lori J. Bechtel-Wherry
- Victoria A. Braithwaite
- Dawn G. Blasko, Chair
- Lee Coraor
- Barbara I. Dewey
- Timothy Lawlor
- Amanda L. Maple
- Paula Milone-Nuzzo