

AY22-15-I

Faculty Senate Issue Log Form

Date-Submitted: 10/27/22

Title-of-Issue: Expanding the Statement on Academic Freedom in the Faculty Handbook

Description: This issue item requests that the current section of the Faculty Handbook entitled Academic Freedom be expanded to include the entirety of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure. This includes the preamble, the 1970 interpretive comments, and the statement on tenure. The recommendation to include the statement in its entirety comes from the AAUP national office which views it as key language on academic freedom for Faculty Handbooks (see slide 11 of the following - [Academic_Freedom_Language_for_Handbooks-Webinar_Slides.pdf](#) (aaup.org)). Its inclusion would move ODU to be in line with best practices in support of Academic Freedom.

Currently, the Faculty Handbook notes that the university subscribes to AAUP's 1940 Statement and lists three key points quoted from it under the section heading Academic Freedom (<https://itsapps.odu.edu/ao/facultyhandbook/index.php?page=ch02s43.html>).

However, in its current form the statement leaves out:

the preamble, which helps university members and the public alike understand that

Rationale: In the wake of the compelled resignation of Dr. Allyn Walker, protests by AAUP and other campus groups as well as a Faculty Senate investigation, developed over the way the university managed the trolling attack against them. Concerns included the harm to academic freedom resulting from threats to safety which lead to a faculty member being removed from the classroom and ultimately feeling compelled to resign from the university. As a result, the university has begun to call for increased discussion of academic freedom on campus (see Provost Agho's Guidelines for the Protection of Scholars and Researchers) and promote its support for academic freedom (see the presentation on Academic Freedom at the New Faculty Orientation). Efforts by the faculty to clarify the meaning and purpose of academic freedom, its relation to tenure, and to the purpose of the university, by the inclusion of the complete 1940 Statement fit neatly within university efforts.

In addition, the Faculty Handbook already relies on the principles and language of AAUP. In fact, the current statement on Academic Freedom explicitly references the 1940 Statement by AAUP. Thus, the addition would not reflect any change in principle or belief. Expanding and updating the statement by including the preamble, the section on academic tenure, and the 1970 interpretive comments, however, will provide an authoritative discussion of the key principles that govern the professional life of a faculty member that is currently missing from the Handbook.

Importantly, inclusion of the expanded discussion provides a definition of academic freedom, its relationship to tenure, and its relationship to the purpose of the university. Including this in the Faculty Handbook will indicate that the university has agreed to this definition and the relationship between academic freedom and tenure. This is important for a number of reasons including that the courts may recognize the Faculty Handbook as an expression of the contract between the university and the faculty member.

Finally, this call to the Faculty Senate to expand the statement on Academic Freedom in the Faculty Handbook is in line with the purpose of the Faculty Senate which is to represent the faculty of the university in recommending policies to the president and other appropriate individuals and bodies on academic freedom and tenure and related matters.

(<https://itsapps.odu.edu/ao/facultyhandbook/index.php?page=ch07s02.html>)

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