

Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee

Annual Report 2023-2024

May 6, 2024

Committee members:

Tom Goyens, Chair

William Folger

Tina Plottel

Eric Rittinger

one at-large vacancy

What follows are the completed charges:

1. Guidelines Regarding Offensive Content in Classroom Learning

On March 27, 2023, the Faculty Senate charged the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AFTC) with “working with students to draft guidelines for academic discourse involving offensive language. The guidelines should 1) explain why students may be expected to engage with and discuss materials that include such language as part of their learning and 2) provide professional best practices and guidance for faculty who include such materials in their coursework and class discussions. The draft guidelines shall be presented to the Faculty Senate by the first meeting in November 2023 and submitted to the Faculty Senate President at least one week in advance.” On May 3, 2023, AFTC sent an initial report and endorsed the AAUP Salisbury Chapter’s statement on academic freedom.

This charge was taken up again in the fall of 2023 to create a final version. In crafting the final version, committee members took inspiration and guidance from the AAUP guidelines and policies already implemented at the University of Maryland College Park, which are cited in the final version. One of our recommendations is that SU fully adopts the “Statement of Free Speech Values” approved at UMD-College Park. AFTC solicited feedback and comments from SGA President Wyatt Parks and SGA Diversity Officer Kennedy Spriggs.

The final version was submitted to the Faculty Senate on November 21, 2023, with a motion to accept the statement. The motion passed at the November 28, 2023 session.

2. Grievance

The AFTC is bound by a policy of strict confidentiality and, therefore, cannot divulge any specific information or names in this report. A grievance was generated during the Summer of 2023. The committee received the official Senate charge, including the original documents, on August 31, 2023. Summer delays are beyond our control, particularly if cases are pressing when most faculty are off contract. The Senate informed us then that the grievance was “urgent.” The

P”) for a junior faculty after an unsatisfactory annual review. However, this is not a uniform policy across campus and is not stipulated in the junior faculty section of the Faculty Handbook. The Handbook only mentions a development plan in a section about the “Comprehensive Review of Tenured Faculty.” However, the paragraphs explaining the need for a development plan begin with the phrase “as with the annual reviews.” The AFTC believes it is a best practice for department chairs to initiate such a plan to avoid potential grievances and appeals. Such a plan promotes good