

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee  
March 10, 2015

Present: Kris Bartanen, Geoffrey Block, Doug Cannon, Betsy Kirkpatrick, Tiffany MacBain (chair), Andreas Madlung, Mark Reinitz, and Amy Spivey

MacBain called the meeting to order at 8:03 am.

I. The minutes of March 3 were approved with small changes to the language intended to clarify the solicitation of outside letters for faculty evaluations.

II. Volunteers were solicited to read the department guidelines for student assistants from Theater Arts, Physics, and Psychology.

III. The committee discussed the new Senate charge to review our statement regarding freedom of expression (attached). The committee compared the language of the paragraph in the [Response Protocol for Incidents of Bias or Hate](#) with the language in the Faculty Code, pp. 2, 3, 5 and 6. The committee identified three areas for discussion. First, the Code states more clearly than the Protocol the distinction between academic freedom and the constitutional right to freedom of expression; it asserts that faculty have the freedom to pursue academic areas authorized by their expertise. The Protocol does not currently acknowledge that the Code recognizes academic freedom as beyond freedom of expression, and that the Code states that it is “an additional assurance to those who teach and pursue knowledge” (page 5). The committee recommends that the Protocol be amended to include language acknowledging academic freedom of the faculty as defined in the Code or to reference the relevant sections of the Code (Ch. 1, p. 3, lines 10-12.). Second, the committee observed that the second half of the paragraph in the Protocol is more restrictive than the Code. The language in the Protocol seems overstated, urging caution against causing student discomfort, whereas the committee recognizes that discomfort often precedes learning. Furthermore, we prefer the word “injured” as in the Code (Ch 1. p.3, line 10) rather than the word “wounding.” Similarly, the word “safe” implies more than physical safety; we suggest a clarification of the distinction between physical or emotional safety and freedom from discomfort. Third, the Protocol paragraph is intended to cover faculty, staff and students, whereas the Code covers only faculty. In this regard, the language should also be compared for consistency with relevant documents covering staff and students.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Betsy Kirkpatrick