

Academic Freedom Committee

David Manier, Chair

Timeline

- 1810 – U z Berlin founded (FWIII, WvH), modern & secular principles (L/L Freiheit)
- 1915 – AAUP founded (AL, JD)
- 1940 – AACU & AAUP agreed to a Statement of Principles that guaranteed professors freedom of research/teaching & tenure.

Timeline

- 2011– Brooklyn College, David Horowitz faced protesters from the campus Palestinian Club.
- 2013 – Brooklyn College, Assemblyman Dov Hikind denounced Judith Butler, pro-BDS campus speakers (and more recently, SJP).
- 2013-14 – Record numbers of speakers were “disinvited” from making commencement addresses (e.g. Condoleezza Rice, Bill Ayers).

Timeline

- 2014 – The Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago, appointed “in light of recent events nationwide that have tested institutional commitments to free and open discourse,” issued a Report supporting “completely free and open discussion of ideas.”
- 2015-16 – Frederick Schaffer (Vice Chancellor & General Counsel) headed a committee to revise a draft statement of CUNY policy on freedom of expression and expressive conduct.

Timeline

- 2016 – Several CUNY organizations (student/faculty groups and the UFS) raised objections to the CUNY draft policy. Some revisions to the policy were made in response.
- The UFS registered its support for the U. of Chicago Report on free expression, and the Executive Committee recommended that all college senates in CUNY join in expressing their support.

Timeline

- Spring 2016 – Lehman College Senate charged the Academic Freedom Committee (AFC) to consider and make recommendations about the CUNY draft policy and the University of Chicago Report on Free Expression.
- Fall 2016 – The AFC passed a motion of support for the U. of Chicago principles, and recommended a similar resolution to the Lehman Senate. Some members of the Senate raised objections to the resolution, and it was tabled for further discussion.

Timeline

- Fall 2016 – In response to faculty and student feedback, CUNY issued revisions to its draft policy, and the UFS (along with other CUNY groups) withdrew its former objections. General Counsel Schaffer resigned and was replaced with Jane Sovern.

Recommendations

- 2017 – At this time, the AFC is not recommending further changes in the CUNY draft policy. Instead we are recommending that Lehman College:
 - 1) express its support for the Univ. of Chicago Report on Free Expression; and
 - 2) publish its own statement supporting freedom of expression and expressive conduct.

Main Points

- The policy guarantees all members of the college community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn;
- although all members of the college community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can not be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas;
- the college may restrict expression that violates the law, that falsely defames a specific individual, that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the college.

Current Political Context

- Bills have recently been introduced in state legislatures in Iowa and North Carolina that seek to establish “political balance” in public universities by basing hiring decisions on the political party affiliations of prospective faculty.
- Professorwatchlist.org maintains a list of “professors that advance a radical agenda in lecture halls,” including Prof. Charles Strozier of CUNY.
- Demands continue to ban Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) from CUNY campuses, or to face cuts in state funding for CUNY.

Websites

- University of Chicago Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression:
<https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FOECommitteeReport.pdf>
- Proposed Lehman College Statement on Academic Freedom:
<https://tinyurl.com/jeyoym6>