

## **Business for Faculty Senate meeting 11/19/2024**

Motion: The Faculty Senate endorses the “Statement by Provost on Support of Academic Freedom”

Background: The message below was distributed by Provost Hall to faculty on July 23, 2024, subject “Important Message from the Provost” and on August 19, 2024, subject “Message to Faculty—Resending earlier email.”

The statement was written in response to concerns raised by a group of faculty. The faculty drafted a statement, which was adopted by the Provost with minor revision.

### **Statement by Provost on Support for Academic Freedom**

As we begin the fall semester, I wanted to affirm this university's commitment to academic freedom. Our mission, as a public research institution, is built upon the twin pillars of scholarship and education, and of encouraging each without fear. This is how we make all feel welcome and safe, and how we play our part in nurturing an engaged and educated citizenry. A university campus can and should encourage the free exploration of knowledge and ideas, without regard to external threats or pressures. This is especially urgent at moments when such free inquiry and expression appear to be most risky, for example, at our current moment with respect to international (e.g. Palestine and Israel) and national (e.g. the presidential election) political conflict. As a public university, it is our responsibility to deepen difficult conversations through our commitment to pursuing the truth, providing contextual knowledge, and modeling the free exchange and rigorous assessment of conflicting ideas, in a context of deep respect for those who hold differing beliefs and opinions. Now, more than ever, it is important that faculty contribute their research and expertise to bear on the most salient questions of our time.

This campus stands firm on the key principles of freedom of thought and opinion in an atmosphere of mutual regard and tolerance of difference. We will continue to condemn all forms of violence and hate speech, as well as any uncivil language or behavior that does not conform to our expectation of respect and responsibility.

It is helpful here to cite the language of the UUP contract by which we all abide:

#### **ARTICLE 9**

##### **Academic Freedom**

9.1 It is the policy of the University to maintain and encourage full freedom, within the law, of inquiry, teaching and research. In the exercise of this freedom faculty members

may, without limitation, discuss their own subject in the classroom; they may not, however, claim as their right the privilege of discussing in their classroom controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.

9.2 The principle of academic freedom shall be accompanied by a corresponding principle of responsibility.

9.3 In their role as citizens, employees have the same freedoms as other citizens. However, in their extramural utterances employees have an obligation to indicate that they are not institutional spokespersons.

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In this moment of sharp controversy and acute disagreement, I believe it is essential to explicitly reassert our commitment to the first principles of a university campus – as a place of learning, critical inquiry, and responsible debate. We owe that to our students, who look to us as models of civic engagement, respect, and responsibility. I thank all of you for your hard work and dedication to the pursuit of truth and understanding.

Sincerely,

Donald