

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure
(Final; Information)

AF.18.01 2017-2018 Annual Report

The Senate *Bylaws* provide for a standing Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure (AFT) to “serve as an authorized faculty group to safeguard the academic freedom of the faculty and tenure status, and to assure that unit governance is in accord with the *University Statutes* and unit bylaws.” AFT may “conduct hearings in cases involving dismissal of tenured faculty,” “investigate instances of possible infringement of academic freedom and hear cases involving allegations of such infringement,” and “investigate allegations of violations of the role of faculty in governance as specified in the *University Statutes* and unit bylaws.” AFT follows the guidelines in the *University Statutes*, specifically Article IX, Section 6 (“Severe Sanctions Other Than Dismissal for Cause for Members of the Faculty”); Article IX, Section 12 (“Dismissal of Academic Staff with Multi-Year Appointments”); Article X, Section 1(d-e) (dismissal hearings); and Article X, Section 2d (appeal by a “staff member who believes that he or she does not enjoy the academic freedom which it is the policy of the University to maintain and encourage”). Like other Senate committees, AFT is required by the Senate *Bylaws* to submit “a written report of its activities and unfinished business to the Senate at the last regular meeting of the year.” What follows is a summary of matters that came before AFT during this academic year (with some background to on-going cases, since a report was not filed in 2017).

1. Most of the Committee’s time was taken up with Article X dismissal hearings, which began December 17, 2015, when the Interim Vice President and Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as delegated by the President of the University, delivered to the Senate a Statement of Charges against a tenured faculty member, pursuant to Section 1 (Tenure of Academic Staff), Paragraphs c, d, and e of Article X (Academic Freedom and Tenure) of the *University Statutes*. A Hearing Committee of five tenured professors and AFT members, chaired by Professor Matthew Finkin, was formed which considered the body of evidence and held hearings, during which the parties and their attorneys were given opportunity to present all relevant evidence. These took place on November 5 and December 1, 2016, and on February 18 and April 22, 2017. After the hearings concluded, counsel requested, and AFT granted, substantial delays in the submission of the post-hearing written argument in order to explore the possibility of settlement. On October 12, 2017, the Hearing Committee was informed by counsel that these negotiations had not been successful. Briefs of the parties were exchanged on December 13, 2017. In February 2018, the AFT Hearing Committee submitted to the parties a draft of its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to which attorneys of the University and the accused replied, leading to a final report issued on April 4, 2018.

2. During March-April 2017, committee members discussed and drafted, in response to U.S. government visa restrictions on foreign students and scholars, an advisory statement “National Security and the Academic Mission,” which was approved by a vote of the committee April 6, 2017. To insure inclusiveness, given the difficulty of organizing a meeting in which most members could participate, this discussion and drafting was conducted electronically. During the 2017-18 Academic Year, Chair Steinberg and other members were involved in continued discussions with University administrators and officials about this issue.

3. On September 1, 2017, Chair Steinberg, committee members, and former Chair Matt Finkin, together with the Committee on University Statutes and Senate Procedures Chair and members, met with representatives of the Office of the President to discuss the delayed progress of SP.15.07, which is a revision of Article X, Section 2, of the *University Statutes* that was approved by the Senate in November 2014, and, after approval by other campus senates, by the University Senates Conference on April 21, 2015, but neither approved nor rejected by the Office of the President. At the time of this year-end report, May 11, 2018, the matter remains unresolved but of persisting concern.

4. In September 2017, in response to a request from the University of Illinois System for feedback on drafts of "UI System Values Statements," Chair Steinberg circulated these drafts to members for discussion, asking for particular attention to the statement on free speech and academic freedom. Again, to insure inclusiveness, given the difficulty of organizing a meeting in which most members could participate, the discussion and drafting was conducted electronically, though, in practice, only a few members replied.

5. On December 18, 2017, Chair Steinberg was invited to a discussion with Provost Wilkin, a representative from the Office of University Counsel, and others about possible academic freedom and tenure cases that might be brought to the committee in the near future.

6. From November 2017 through May 2018, Chair Steinberg participated in the Provost's Task Force on Speech, soliciting by email the knowledge and opinions of other committee members. Again, given the difficulty of organizing a meeting in which most members could participate, this discussion was conducted electronically.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND TENURE

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