

Oct. 15, 2024

Dear Professor Dalpiaz,

Last month the Senate Committee on the Library was tasked by you as chair of the Senate Committee on University Statutes and Senate Procedures with providing input on the most recent draft of proposed revisions of the University *Statutes*. At its previous meeting the committee did so, giving particular attention to what impact these revisions might have on the effective functioning of the University Library. As a consequence, I have been tasked by the committee with providing this report and raising a significant concern.

Article 10 section 6 of the revised *Statutes* states, “full freedom within the law of inquiry, discourse, teaching, research, and publication” is extended only to “all faculty and those academic professionals engaged in such activities.” Given that in Article 2 Section 4 “academic professional” staff members are explicitly distinguished from “civil service” staff members, civil service library staff – and other civil service staff members as well -- would be excluded from the protections of academic freedom. This is a significant step back from the current statutes, where the definition of “academic staff” includes “editors, librarians” and academic freedom protections thus are explicitly extended to the library employees who conduct educational programming. The revisions as proposed, however, would explicitly exclude civil service library employees from any academic freedom protections. And they need these protections. In the Library, in the course of conducting educational programming it is the job of these individuals to respond to questions relating to research and teaching. To do so effectively, it is crucial that they have academic freedom protections. With this in mind, we would hope that the university will ensure that full protections of academic freedom are extended to all faculty and staff who need them

In addition to this specific concern, the Senate Committee on the Library was also concerned about the status of “academic” staff members in general, and in particular “Academic Professionals,” who, as just seen, at least have the possibility of having access to the protections of Academic Freedom. In the proposed statute revisions not only have the 47 appearances of the term “academic staff” been deleted altogether, but also, in some regards (but by no means exhaustively or consistently) the term “academic staff” has been replaced by the term “academic professional.” But this replacement is problematic. For one thing, it is nowhere defined what an “Academic Professional” is, not even in Article 9 Section 3, specifically on the topic of “The Employment of Academic Professionals.” The closest this section comes to a clarification is in Section 3.6, “Academic professionals whose title includes “visiting,” “acting,” “interim,” or “adjunct”

are also excepted from the above provisions.” But does this mean that everyone whose title includes these terms is an Academic Professional? For example, would this make an Interim Provost an Academic Professional? Surely not, one might think. So further clarification of the use of this terminology is needed. Elsewhere, “Academic Professionals” are lumped into amorphous categories that includes emeriti and students (Article 2 Section 4c,e) on the one hand, and faculty and postdoctoral research associates on the other (Article 9 Section 2b,c). Otherwise, as already seen above, the only definition of what an Academic Professional is seems to be by default: if a staff member is not a Civil Service employee then by default they must be an “Academic Professional” (as indicated in Article 2 Section 6, and Article 9 Section 2b-d). But this will not do. At present, the term “Academic Professional” seems to be a fuzzy grey area occupying a shifting frontier between “faculty” and “staff” and having attributes of both. The term needs to be more specifically defined.

Finally, we would suggest that all university personnel, and staff members in particular, be advised to review these new revisions very carefully.

With all best regards,

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Chair, Senate Committee on the Library

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