

Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AF&T)

February 24, 2017

Minutes of the Meeting

These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** Update on AAUP Representation on AF&T; Discussion of President Trump's Executive Order on Immigration and Visas; Update on Free Speech Forum; Personnel Plans]

PRESENT: Phil Buhmann (co-chair), Anne Barnes, Jerry Cohen, Marti Hope Gonzales, Ben Intoy, Deborah John, Holley Locher, Karen Miksch, Gopalan Nadathur, Gary Peter, Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, Nathan Shippee, George Trachte

REGRETS: Teresa Kimberley (co-chair), Jessica Larson, Yuichiro Onishi

GUESTS: Eva von Dassow, president, American Association of University Professors (AAUP), University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Chapter

OTHERS: Rilyn Eischens, student reporter, Minnesota Daily

1. Update on AAUP Representation on AF&T

Co-chair Phil Buhmann reported that he attended a meeting of the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) on February 2, 2017 to present the resolution on formally adding American Association of University Professors (AAUP) representation to the committee in an ex-officio capacity. He said that there was a robust discussion at the FCC meeting, and that the FCC had concerns about this addition, including the fact that no other senate committees have representation from "outside" organizations. The FCC suggested that the Twin Cities chapter of the AAUP could add it to their rules that someone from the chapter should regularly attend AF&T members. As AF&T has already extended the invitation for an AAUP member to attend as a guest, and both officially invited guests and ex-officio members can speak at the meeting, but neither can make a motion or vote, the end result is the same.

A heated discussion ensued, in which Eva von Dassow, president, American Association of University Professors (AAUP), University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Chapter voiced her concerns that this arrangement would be *ad hoc*, and that leadership changes or turnover in the future could cause the arrangement to fall apart. She also said that the AAUP is not like other

“outside” organizations, as one must be a Twin Cities faculty member or faculty-like P&A to be an AAUP member. Gopalan Nadathur agreed, saying that if retirees and alumni, who serve on other committees, are not considered outside of the University, nor should the Twin Cities chapter of the AAUP be so considered. Buhlmann acknowledged that calling the Twin Cities chapter an “outside” organization is splitting hairs, but said since the Twin Cities chapter is a local chapter of a national organization, he can see the FCC’s point. He reiterated that AAUP representation at committee meetings is very relevant and welcome. Jerry Cohen pointed out that AAUP representation was desirable because the AAUP provides a lot of information that is helpful to the committee, not for any other reason. Buhlmann said that FCC understood this, but felt that that information was also available from a guest. von Dassow said that she had contacted Gary Engstrand, a former, long-time University Senate Office employee, for advice. She reported that Engstrand said he could sympathize with the FCC, but the request for formal representation was not illogical. He suggested drafting a general bylaw amendment to guarantee that the proposal refer *only* to the Twin Cities chapter of the AAUP, and could not be interpreted to allow any other outside group to claim a right to committee membership. von Dassow suggested following Engstrand’s advice.

Buhlmann observed that so far only two voting members had weighed in, and asked if any other members had opinions. As none were offered and several members had sent their regrets, Buhlmann suggested that the discussion be tabled until all members had time to give it thought and weigh in.

2. Discussion on President Trump’s Executive Order on Immigration and Visas

Next, the discussion turned to President Trump’s executive order on immigration and visas. Buhlmann shared an email that he had sent on January 29, 2017 to chemistry faculty, which read:

As director of graduate studies, I am worried that our chemistry program and current and prospective students of our department (and those of our peers) will be impacted by the recent executive order that stipulates a 90-day suspension of visas and other immigration benefits to all nationals of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia. I am also concerned that this order may be extended beyond 90 days.

I have therefore signed a petition against the renewal of this order. This petition has already been signed by nearly 5000 members of academia, all through the country, including numerous Nobel prize winners, as well as a range of faculty of the University of Minnesota. Here is the link if you want to know more.

<https://notoimmigrationban.com/>

I understand that we all may have different opinions, but given the importance of the issue for our students and our program, I felt it was appropriate to make you aware of this problem.

He said that Senator Al Franken had contacted him and asked for permission to use this statement in the U.S. Senate as evidence of harm the executive order has caused in higher education. Buhlmann said that the executive order seriously affects faculty, staff and students at the University and impedes researchers, prospective and current graduate students, and international undergraduates from attending the University, or from leaving it (if they are already here) to visit home for fear that they may not be allowed back in. He said that although there have been many such statements and sentiments, he has heard from those primarily affected by the order that hearing the sentiment expressed often and from multiple sources is important. Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs Rebecca Ropers-Huilman added that it is important to remember that people are under added stress at this time due to this order-- even people not directly affected may have family members or close friends affected-- and urged kindness and compassion. She also urged people to keep track of concrete ways that individuals, units and the University have been able to support those affected by the order. Buhlmann said that the FCC is drafting a statement, which AF&T could consider endorsing or co-signing. Members agreed that it was a good idea to either co-sign the FCC's statement or draft a statement specifically from AF&T. Buhlmann said that he would follow up with the FCC to see if they would share their draft, and then AF&T could decide whether to endorse that statement or create its own.

Ropers-Huilman cautioned that while statements are important, they are not enough. She encouraged members to think of other ways to support those affected by the order, and to give feedback to the administration as well.

Deborah John asked whether the FCC has reached out to Senator Franken and Senator Klobuchar regarding admission of graduate students and visas, which is a huge issue for the University. She said that Senator Klobuchar had assisted with a difficult visa issue in the past, and that perhaps an exception for graduate students already admitted to the University could be negotiated. Buhlmann said that he would check with the FCC. Ropers-Huilman offered that Scott Lanyon, vice provost and dean of graduate education, had instructed directors of graduate studies not to discriminate against students from the countries named in the executive order for fear that they might not be able to obtain visas. von Dassow said that she strongly objected to carving out an exception for graduate students, as this leaves out everyone else affected.

Members pointed out that as the order had been stayed and the Trump administration had promised a new order, the situation was evolving.

3. Update on Free Speech Forum

Buhlmann then updated the committee on the FCC's proposed forum on free speech, which had been discussed at a meeting between himself, Teresa Kimberley, FCC Chair Colin Campbell, Student Senate Consultative Committee Chair Trish Palermo, and University Senate Office staff on February 22, 2017. He said that the students were focusing on other efforts and did not want to spearhead organizing this forum, as Campbell had hoped. However, Buhlmann, Kimberley, and Campbell still felt that some sort of campus discussion around free speech should take place during spring 2017. Suggestions at the meeting on February 22 were to consult with stakeholders, send out a survey, and/or hold listening sessions to find out what would be most helpful and effective. Campbell, Kimberley, and Buhlmann also felt that it needed to be an ongoing discussion. Buhlmann invited the committee to weigh in, and Cohen said that free speech is important, but that a non-hostile educational and work environment is also important. He said people should be free to discuss and disagree, but that it is not desirable to make campus unwelcoming for some people, and that this is a difficult balance, especially in the current political climate. Buhlmann observed that students are more willing, it seems, to support "censoring" certain ideas in favor of a safe and welcoming campus climate, and Cohen pointed out that undergraduates come from high school, which is a much more protected environment, and that adapting to the University free speech environment takes time.

4. Personnel Plans

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to small working group discussions regarding the review of collegiate personnel plans. Buhlmann officially adjourned the meeting, and instructed members that they were free to leave when their group discussions were concluded.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office