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# The University Senate

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## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

### Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AF&T)

November 22, 2024

### 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 reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents. The University Senate Office utilized notes taken during the meeting, video recording and transcript of the meeting, and AI to assist in summarizing substantive parts of the meeting transcript to compose these minutes. Minutes are reviewed by the committee before posting.*

**[In these minutes:** Report of the Graduate Faculty Values Statement Committee; Collegiate Personnel Plans and Justifications of Long-term Appointments; Post Tenure Review Discussion; Additional Committee Business]

**PRESENT:** Eric Van Wyk (chair), Carolyn Bishoff, Teri Caraway, Sumanth Gopinath, Rachel Johnson, Margaret Kelly, Chase Krug, Michael Kyba, Danya Leebaw, Beth Lewis, Lee Penn, Madeline Rowe, George Weiblen

**REGRETS:** Bruno Chaouat, Rebecca Krug, Clifford Steer, Christophe Wall-Romana

**ABSENT:** Upendra Chalise

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Ole Gram, associate vice provost, Faculty and Academic Affairs, Scott Lanyon, vice provost and dean, Graduate Education, Laurie Cooper Stoll, director, University Senate Office, Charlotte Voight, director, Faculty Initiatives

#### 1. Call to Order

Professor Eric Van Wyk, chair, called the meeting to order.

#### 2. Report of the Graduate Faculty Values Statement Committee

Van Wyk then introduced Scott Lanyon, vice provost and dean, Graduate Education, who discussed the [final report](#) of the graduate faculty values statement committee. The Faculty Values Statement is intended to enhance faculty mentoring and advising effectiveness. The statement emphasizes values such as respect, inclusivity, humility, and professional integrity.

Lee Penn highlighted the importance of clear language, noting that punctuation issues might cause ambiguity about the categories. Michael Kyba expressed skepticism about the necessity and potential misuse of the statement, questioning its origin, justification, and the risks of enforcing conformity or excluding diverse faculty values. He argued that graduate faculty values should align with core institutional values of truth and excellence rather than aspirational traits

like humility, which he found subjective and potentially irrelevant. He further stated that telling faculty what values to have infantilizes the faculty.

Sumanth Gopinath shared mixed feelings, acknowledging humility as valuable but echoing concerns about potential misuse and the limited practical impact of abstract value statements. He advocated for actionable tools, such as individualized mentor-mentee agreements, as more effective for guiding faculty-student relationships. He also raised questions about the committee's composition and the applicability of the values across different academic disciplines. Lanyon responded by clarifying the draft's purpose as a flexible guide for self-reflection and improvement and invited further input to ensure relevance across disciplines, acknowledging the challenge of balancing inclusivity with practical committee limitations.

George Weiblen noted a shift in student expectations for better mentorship, raising concerns about potential misuse of the value statement and recommending alternative terms like "practices" or "conduct" for broader acceptance. Carolyn Bishoff highlighted the usefulness of clear bullet points in helping students identify inappropriate mentorship situations. Kyba proposed reframing the initiative as "principles of effective mentorship" to focus on actionable guidelines. Lanyon agreed that faculty are the primary audience and emphasized the statement's role in fostering self-reflection rather than enforcement. Van Wyk echoed concerns about imposing top-down values, concluding with a consensus to refine terminology and focus on mentorship principles for constructive implementation.

### **3. Collegiate Personnel Plans and Justifications of Long-term Appointments**

The committee meeting then transitioned to addressing collegiate personnel plans, including academic appointments and teaching functions, which require feedback to the provost. Van Wyk reviewed the folder containing materials including new and prior collegiate plans but noted access issues and inconsistent file naming, suggesting renaming files for better organization. He outlined the process for reviewing collegiate plans, with members assigned specific areas to comment on before summarizing findings in a [report](#) to the provost. Feedback was sought on whether interim responses should be provided to colleges and on the timeline for completing reviews. Ole Gram clarified that the Carlson School of Management was delayed in finalizing its plan but was actively working on it.

Beth Lewis stressed the importance of an earlier timeline due to outdated data and colleges' need for timely feedback, while Kyba emphasized the need for clear evaluation criteria to streamline the process. Van Wyk referenced past reports and spreadsheets to provide context, encouraging members to review these materials to understand expectations for evaluations. Additionally, Van Wyk discussed long-term appointments and reporting requirements for colleges and units, emphasizing accurate data collection, distinguishing between seven-year appointments and job codes, and addressing potential misinterpretations of guidelines. Justifications under Section 3.4 of the tenure code were reviewed, with concerns about violations acknowledged as a complex issue. Reporting for P&A staff teaching roles was also discussed, noting their exclusion from the tenure code. Van Wyk proposed refining reporting methods for future clarity and suggested the committee use the next two months to prepare for further discussion in January.

### **4. Post Tenure Review Discussion**

After a five minute break, Van Wyk reflected on discussions about post-tenure review, highlighting efforts to gather insights and feedback from those with relevant experience. He

noted progress in reviewing 7.12 statements, which define departmental post-tenure expectations, with coverage increasing from 60% to 80%, and proposed moving forward while avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. He invited Madeline Rowe to revisit [key findings and questions from previous analyses](#) to guide the discussion. Rowe identified recurring patterns in the evaluations, including concerns about consistency across departments, clarity of goals, citation of Regent policies, and whether expectations should be standardized. She highlighted the need to examine outlier departments and suggested that additional guidance from the provost's office could help address ambiguities.

Discussions also focused on the processes for addressing underperformance, including whether decisions to initiate performance improvement plans (PIPs) should involve faculty committees or remain with department heads. Weiblen noted that underperformance criteria often lacked specificity, with some departments acting after just one year of underperformance. He suggested using data to identify promising practices for the next review cycle. Teri Caraway emphasized the importance of consistent documentation and feedback before escalating performance issues, pointing out cases where faculty were blindsided by PIPs. Gram and others agreed, advocating for clearer documentation of underperformance patterns prior to initiating PIPs.

Kyba raised concerns about salary protections for tenured faculty in the medical school, where salary is divided into "base" and "increment" with uncertainty about whether tenure protects the full salary or only the base portion, and if the latter that this undermined tenure protections, considering that base is typically only about 20% of total, and wondered whether pressure was ever placed on individuals under PIPs to leave. The group proposed forming a working group to consolidate observations, propose improvements, and draft recommendations. Participants stressed the need for fairness, mentoring, and shared responsibility in addressing underperformance, recognizing challenges posed by decentralized practices. They agreed that clearer guidelines, better documentation, and shared best practices could ensure consistent and fair implementation across departments.

## **5. Additional Committee Business**

Van Wyk then discussed the president's task force on institutional speech and a [draft policy](#), noting that earlier committee concerns, such as the removal of a five-day embargo on unit statements and changes to how complaints are handled, had been addressed. A key change was ensuring statements could only be removed for procedural violations, not content. He emphasized the importance of reviewing the finalized policy before making an endorsement decision. The committee deliberated on the pros and cons of endorsing the policy, with members suggesting endorsement could present a unified faculty stance to the administration and Board of Regents. However, they agreed to wait for the final draft, expected before the Faculty Senate's December 3 meeting, to ensure no new issues arise.

Van Wyk also updated the group on the progress of a task force addressing hiring processes and academic freedom concerns that President Cunningham described in her July 15 [email](#). He mentioned that academic freedom appeared to have been dropped in the task force's charge. The President had advised waiting for an announcement expected within a week, leaving questions about the task force's direction unresolved. Other members shared similar uncertainties, indicating a lack of clarity about the committee's charge and progress.

Regarding the planned symposium on academic freedom, Van Wyk and Caraway expressed disappointment, feeling it failed to address faculty concerns raised in previous votes of no confidence. Van Wyk emphasized the need for concrete responses to these issues, rather than general events. Lewis and Gram suggested flexibility in shaping the symposium's focus, proposing topics such as faculty rights, student expression, and institutional accountability. Despite the concerns, some participants considered the symposium an opportunity for constructive dialogue, depending on its structure and focus. Chase Krug stressed the importance of involving students if they were the intended audience. Caraway criticized the symposium as an inadequate response to the no confidence motions passed by the Faculty Senate and the CLA Assembly, and to the serious academic freedom concerns raised by this committee in its [letter to former Interim President Ettinger and Provost Croson](#) about the unhiring of Raz Segal. She viewed it as dismissive of serious shared governance concerns. Other members noted the broader context of external threats to academic freedom, with Van Wyk suggesting that a more proactive defense of academic principles by university leadership would be more impactful, especially actions that acknowledge and address past events. The committee thus declined to participate in the selection of speakers for the symposium.

## **6. Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Van Wyk adjourned the meeting.

Laurie Cooper Stoll  
University Senate Office