

**Strategic Planning and Academic Freedom Committee
Vanderbilt University Senate
Report for Academic Year 2012-2013
Chair: Rangaraj Ramanujam (Owen)**

Committee Members

Jeremy Atack (A&S)
Eric Bond (A&S)
Joseph Gigante (Medicine)
Aniruddha Gokhale (Engineering)
Joel Harrington (A&S)
Rangaraj Ramanujam, Chair (Owen)
Joel Tellinghuisen (A&S)
David Weintraub (A&S) (ex officio) [Executive Committee Liaison]
Danny Winder (Medicine)

Committee Charges:

1. Assess the overall strategic direction of the university with respect to online, distance and continuing education.
2. Determine ways to effectively apprise the Board of Trust of faculty's contributions to the various missions of the University.
3. Enhance decision making processes to support college-level initiatives.
4. Continue the development of a privacy policy for offices and labs: Initial discussions have begun with the SPAF Task Force and a preliminary draft policy was circulated, but this work is incomplete and should carry over to the next Senate. Deans David Raiford and Tim McNamara have expressed willingness to engage and collaborate on the development of a policy.
5. Review the protections for faculty academic freedom. Survey statements of academic freedom at peer institutions.

Progress

Charge 1 regarding online education

Early on, the committee concluded that the rapid evolution of online education could have a potentially significant impact on faculty roles and responsibilities in the years ahead. Given the complexity and uncertainty around this issue, the committee decided to focus almost exclusively on this charge during the year. The committee met on 6 occasions to discuss the online issue. In addition, committee members met with the Co-chair of the Chancellor's Committee on Social Media, the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education who is managing the implementation of the University's initial entry into MOOCs, the co-founders of online education companies Coursera and 2U, and some of the Vanderbilt faculty offering courses in Coursera.

Based on these activities, the committee decided to engage the broader faculty senate in an ongoing conversation about online issues. The committee focused on 3 sets of issues—intellectual property rights, selection of faculty and courses, and recognizing MOOCs for credits—as exemplars of the type of issues the faculty might have to routinely encounter in the years ahead. These issues were discussed in three different faculty Senate meetings during 2013 leading to the following

conclusions: 1) Where possible, online courses can and should be administered with current policies & procedures for classroom courses, and 2) It is critical for faculty senate to work proactively with the administration.

The SPAF committee formally recommended that the faculty senate appoint a taskforce to advise the University on faculty roles, rights, and responsibilities with respect to online education, and provide regular updates to the faculty senate.

Charges 2-5

These should be carried over to the next Senate if it remains a priority for the Exec Committee. There are specific action items to report.