

March 29, 2016

Dear President Call, Provost Marchese, COO Newcomb, and Dean Palmer,

On February 8th, Terence Diamond of the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs sent an email to the faculty advising them of a newly-revised Grants Manual, and supplied an online link to it. On November 17th of last year, I had met with Dean Palmer for clarification of statements she had made in an earlier email on various new policies regarding application for grants by the faculty. Dean Palmer assured me that a new documentation of these policies would be forthcoming; I assume the email sent by Mr. Diamond is that documentation.

The Academic Freedom Committee has reviewed the Manual, and we find several issues in it that could be considered violations of the academic freedom of the faculty:

Bottom of page 3: "Cabinet review ensures that the project is consistent with institutional missions and priorities;"

Middle of page 8:

"1.7 Internal Review Process

The internal review process at QCC consists of both program and fiscal reviews to ensure that all activities contained in the grant proposal are consistent with the funding source's guidelines and College policies and priorities."

The Committee finds the idea that a proposed grant be reviewed in order to determine if it is in line with the College's policies and priorities a direct violation of the academic freedom of the faculty. The area of investigation should not be so limited. Either these passages should be stricken from the Manual, or they should be modified in such a way that the language does not suggest that there would be areas of investigation that would not be consistent with the College's policies and priorities, and so not acceptable as grant proposals. The Committee is skeptical that the Cabinet has the breadth of disciplinary knowledge to qualify it to evaluate any and all proposals that would come before it.

Further, the specification of consistency with college policies and priorities is vague and prone to subjectivity. As the academic senate is the one and only official body recognized by the CUNY BOT for setting college policies, what are those policies that the cabinet would be using to determine approval of grant submissions? Though we recommend against an internal review process in general, at the very least, before any review to determine consistency with college policies and priorities, faculty should be given a full statement of just what those might be. Also, in the event an inconsistency is identified, it would need to be clearly and promptly communicated to the grant writer and subject to appeal.

Bottom of page 5:

"Applicants must use QCC's *Released Time Request* form (see Attachment #3) to obtain written approval from both their

department chairperson and the Vice President for Academic Affairs for all faculty requests for released time.”

The Committee would point out here that there is in the current form of these guidelines no appeal process to deal with the possible and likely eventuality that the release time request is turned down by a department chairperson. We suggest an appeal of a chairperson’s negative decision first to the Department P & B, and then to the Academic Review Committee. We ask for this as a remedy to the problem created by requiring such an approval for reassigned time by a department chairperson because we are all painfully aware of situations wherein there are strong divisions within departments and the possibility of a chairperson having a bias due to those divisions.

The Committee recommends that these passages in the Manual be modified/ removed to bring them in line with the principles of academic freedom as they are recognized by the greater academic community, and by the legal precedents that have contributed to those principles.

Sincerely,

Julian Stark, Chair
Todd Holden, Secretary
John Talbird
Edmund Clingan
Wilma Fletcher-Anthony
Anthony Kolios
David Humphries
Jenny Maan Lin
Philip Pecorino
Alicia Sinclair