

# Minutes of the 12/1/21 Meeting

Academic Freedom Meeting

12/1/2021

Present : Stark Julian , Clingan, Edmund; Cornick, Jonathan; Counihan, Beth Ann; Ferrari-Bridgers, Franca; Gayle, Marvin; Pecorino, Philip; Rosen, Ted

The meeting started at 1:30PM.

1. The first item on the agenda was the election of the secretary and the chair of the committee for academic year 2021-2022. Before the election we all agreed that we will elect a new secretary and chair every academic year. Elections were held and Julian was elected chair and Franca secretary for 2021-2022 academic year.
1. The second item on the agenda regarded the unilateral decision of the CUNY Chancellor's office to require faculty to go back to 70% in-person teaching and 30% online in the Spring 2022 without consulting with department chairs and faculty. The Chancellor's office decision disagrees with academic freedom regulations that state that department chairs, P&B members and faculty have the ultimate say on how courses should be taught and in which modality.
1. Philip reminded the committee of the essential four academic freedoms: who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study. Clearly, "how it shall be taught" is being violated by this edict from the Chancellor's office. During the summer of 2020, the chair of the History department attempted to impose certain online teaching methodologies on his department. The AF Committee advised the chair that this was not acceptable, as outlined just above. The chair then advanced the policies at their May 2021 department meeting, where they were voted on by the faculty and approved. Edmund pointed out that part of the agreement involved compensation for any training, which was something that would not have been easy for the College to come by.
1. Many department chairs and P&B members accepted the Chancellor's office mandate without properly consulting with their own individual faculty members. Therefore, it is a task of this committee to inform chairs about academic freedom rules and regulations so that chairs can understand why it is important to consult with faculty members when scheduling classes for any given semester. Phillip will share with the committee the UFS documents related to the topic of academic freedom and COVID.
1. A discussion on the state of enrollment at the College, and how it perhaps relates to enrollment in online vs. hybrid vs. in-person followed. Enrollment in the

college at large is lagging behind what it was a year ago. Marvin told us that in Engineering Technology enrollment in courses designated as Hybrid is proceeding at a good rate, but In-person courses are not filling well. Jonathan told us that in Mathematics, most of the students want online classes. This, in spite of Interim Vice Chancellor Lemons's statement at the UFS that "Students don't know what's best for them." Edmund warned that students want online because "cheating is massive." Students are simply not learning. Hunter and Baruch had the best enrollment numbers, and the most In-person offerings. Eventually, CUNY will be forced to go back to largely in-person. Franca mentioned that retention is a big problem, whether in online or In-person. Beth said that only 6-8 students out of 25 are going to pass, if they can get through to the end of the course. This is true of other English 101 students (APL students (?)) too, how will they go on to other classes? Jonathan added that we won't go back to 2018/19, we can't teach that way, and therein lie the academic freedom issues. Philip agrees and says that many of the current teaching modalities didn't exist then. Philip suggests that the question should be asked of faculty whether they are comfortable in a given modality in terms of achieving the learning outcomes. He suggests:

1. If a faculty member is not consulted by their chair with regards to the content and/or modality of the courses they will be assigned to teach in any given semester, and if the faculty believes that the content and/or the modality of the courses assigned are not in their view pedagogically appropriate to maintain satisfactory retention rates and/ or achieve the learning outcomes, the faculty member should notify their chair in writing and express their concerns about possible negative retention rates in the courses they were assigned to teach without previous consultation. This would allow a faculty member to pick the modality they are best in, and the chair to assign faculty on that basis.
1. Moreover, we discussed that if faculty are asked to participate in any pedagogical and teaching workshops at any given time, faculty should be compensated for attending mandatory pedagogical workshops. Philip suggests that if Deans could assign faculty to classes, all such assignments would be political. Ted sees two issues here: 1) What is best for our students. 2) What are the academic freedom considerations. Jonathan points out that things were not so great before the pandemic. But we all want what's best for our students – we as faculty know the best course. Philip reminds us that he had tried to introduce, through the Academic Senate, a prerequisite class for online learning, but it did not go anywhere.
1. A discussion of the new Supplemental Instruction program, which is under the aegis of Dean Pullin, followed. Dean Pullin is presenting this program at department meetings and has already done several of these. Edmund feels it is ironic that the funding for such programs usually precedes the actual determination of what the program will be. He feels that the program will not survive beyond the five years for which it is funded. Jonathan points out

academic freedom issues of such (such as the HSI program) programs, in that the peer mentors sometimes act independently and present material that is not desired by the faculty member who is actually running the class; there is actually already a history of this in the Math department, going back more than a decade. Several present pointed out that these student mentors will be paid at half the rate of adjuncts.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:38PM.