

A General communication to QCC Faculty

The QCC Committee on Academic Freedom has met several times to discuss matters of Academic Freedom at this College. The Committee has cause to believe that serious violations of Academic Freedom have occurred and are still occurring in connection with Pathways and they involve the denial of the proper exercise of academic judgments on the part of faculty.

Academic Freedom is given to faculty so that they may make their best academic judgments concerning who is to teach, what is to be taught, to whom it is to be taught, and how it is to be taught. The Pathways initiative of the University Chancellery has had elements in it that have denied faculty the right to make these judgments and done so in a variety of ways. One way is to instruct faculty that they are not free to make any judgments which are not in compliance with the judgment of the chancellery. Another is to direct faculty to make judgments in only one particular manner, which is to accept what is presented to them by those outside of the faculty and even outside of the college and the academic discipline.

In addition, it is to be considered that there may well be violations of:

- CUNY Board of Trustees bylaw 8.6 with regard to the standards for curriculum
- NY State Education Department regulations with regard to the setting of curriculum
- Middle States Criteria for Accreditation

The Committee believes that such violations are occurring and have occurred at the level of the academic departments and with the college governance body.

The Committee is also aware that the atmosphere surrounding Pathways has led to an atmosphere of increased intimidation which has impaired the functioning of college committees.

The Committee is aware of the UFS statement on Pathways and AF.

<http://cunyufs.org/A/AFC%20Statement%20Opposing%20 Pathways %205-7-12.pdf>

The Committee has decided to await action by the AAUP before entering into any formal actions here at QCC on these matters.

Sincerely,

Membership of the Committee
on Academic Freedom, QCC

The Committee on Academic Freedom Of the University Faculty Senate

A Statement Opposing “Pathways”

“The responsibility of the university teacher is primarily to the public itself, and to the judgment of his [or her] own profession”.

I The Committee on Academic Freedom of the University Faculty Senate opposes CUNY’s attempt to restructure general education throughout CUNY. The Committee view Pathways as hostile to academic freedom and to the concept of professional judgment and expertise. In particular, Pathways violates a basic principle of Academic Freedom upon which the University rests, i.e., that professional expertise and qualifications guided by the standards of a discipline give faculty the right and the responsibility to decide on standards, courses, and means of instruction free from pressure from the administration or outside pressures.

li As an attempt to restructure general education throughout CUNY, Pathways has a direct impact on curriculum, which lies within the purview of CUNY faculty, per the By-Laws of the University. The creation of a 3-credit science requirement in the Common Core, for example, in effect eliminates labs in science courses without faculty approval.

lii These are curricular matters and are the responsibility of faculty. By denying faculty their responsibility over such matters, Pathways is hostile to academic freedom and to the concept of professional judgment and expertise.

Furthermore, the implementation of Pathways violates shared governance and therefore a basic principle behind United States higher education. It has proceeded by forming small committees of faculty selected by the administration and by proceeding against the will and better judgment of discipline groups, governance bodies, and faculty at large. It also continues to add curricular constraints to Pathways that significantly alter the proposal brought before the Board of Trustees in June 2011. According to CUNY Board of Trustees Bylaw ¶18.6, faculty is responsible for “academic standards of admission, retention, grading and graduation requirements, curriculum, textbook selection, and pedagogies.”

According to CUNY Board of Trustees, curriculum is the responsibility of faculty. On the grounds that it is not in compliance with the stated Bylaws of the university and undermines principles of academic freedom, the Academic Freedom Committee of the University Faculty Senate therefore rejects Pathways.

I 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure
. <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubres/policydocs/contents/1915.htm>.

II i For example, the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities defines these faculty responsibilities to include “curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process.”