

Faculty Handbook Committee

Year End Report and Recommendations for Next Year

Submitted by John Matsusaka and Ruth Wood, co-chairs
May 22, 2023

1. Activities 2022-2023
 - a) The Committee's focus this year, as per its charge, was to draft a new Chapter 6 on investigative procedures. The Committee worked with various faculty and administrative stakeholders during the year, incorporating various recommendations and reports produced by previous committees, and produced a new chapter that was approved by the Academic Senate on May 10, 2023.
 - b) The Committee also processed a number of more conventional amendments requested by administrators, and made changes as necessary to align with the new Chapter 6. Those 17 changes were also approved by the Academic Senate on May 10, 2023.
2. Committee members: Steve Bucher (Viterbi); Odilon Camara (Marshall); Rob Filback (Rossier); Marty Levine (provost office); Morris Levy (Dornsife); John Matsusaka (Marshall); Marco Papa (Viterbi); Jessica Parr (Dornsife); Ruth Wood (Keck); Alexis Zoto (Roski)
3. Recommendations for 2023-2024
 - a) *Academic freedom and open discussion.* Academic freedom and open discussion in the classroom remain contested topics – some feel they are under attack – in higher education across the country, and various parts of USC have developed new guidelines and issued statements in the last couple of years. The committee recommends that the related content in the handbook be reviewed and updated as necessary.
 - In doing so, there appear to be two separate but connected issues: academic freedom and classroom discussion.
 - The Committee's preliminary assessment is that the Faculty Handbook may benefit from additional language relating to academic freedom in the arts.
 - One approach would be for next year's committee to "test" the existing language against some of the high-profile cases that have occurred around the country recently, to see if the existing language offers the necessary protections.
 - If a preliminary review determines that new language may be appropriate, the Committee is probably too narrow a body to draft new language itself. One recommended path would be for the EB to create a small ad hoc group including representation from the EB, FHC, GC, and provost office.
 - Any text for the handbook should be brief; it is possible that the existing text itself is too long and repetitive.
 - b) *School level investigatory processes.* The new Chapter 6 envisions that many complaints will be handled through school-level, as opposed to central processes. The Committee believes it

is important for each school to have written guidelines indicating its processes, and that those guidelines should be easily available to faculty.

- The Committee does not believe that it is feasible or desirable to list those processes in the Faculty Handbook. However, the handbook may be an appropriate place to list a set of minimum expectations for what should be included in the school-level process. Such a list might include such things as: procedures for recording complaints and their resolution; provision for faculty consultation during processes.
- The development of such procedures is beyond the scope of the Committee and probably beyond the scope of the EB or any faculty body. This is probably a task that should be led by the provost, if so inclined. One model would be for the provost to appoint a committee involving deans and senate members to identify key issues and develop some sort of template that could then be customized by the individual schools.
- The Committee received feedback from faculty that they have a general preference for having matters handled by the dean's office (in consultation with the faculty) rather than by employee relations.

- c) *Grievances.* Although we have heard isolated and idiosyncratic complaints about specific aspects of the grievance process, we are not aware of any specific problem in current practices that requires addressing. However, the revisions in Chapter 6 will eliminate the existing grievance process in cases of faculty misconduct. Moreover, since it has been a while since the process was reviewed, we recommend that the EB charge next year's Committee to review Chapter 7 to determine if anything needs to be updated. As part of that review, the Committee should interview faculty members and administrators with experience in the process.
- d) *Faculty Councils.* As school faculty councils continue to develop, it may be time for a review of the content in the handbook related to those councils to see if anything ought to be updated in light of current practice. It may be useful, for example, to state best practices, such as having an understanding between the dean and faculty council about how the dean will consult with faculty on various matters such as administrative appointments, curriculum changes, and so forth (in some schools this takes the form of a decision matrix.)