Rationale for Academic Freedom Proposal

The proposed revision to the Faculty Constitution (FSH 1520) will expand the scope of academic freedom at the university. The proposed revision adds protection for faculty to speak and write freely on matters pertaining to university programs and policies and to faculty governance.

This new protection is important for several reasons. First, since faculty are engaged in more non-traditional learning and learning environments with students, the scope of the traditional protection for teaching activities has become ambiguous. Second, because the institution has added many faculty who do not enjoy the protection of tenure, clarity in the scope of academic freedom protection is crucial. Finally, robust and healthy faculty governance depends upon the free and open participation of faculty.

For those familiar with the original language proposed in spring 2014, there are two differences. First, the original proposal included amendments to the Faculty Constitution FSH 1520 and also to the Academic Freedom Policy in FSH 3160. Since FSH 3160 is based on Idaho State Board of Regents Policy, the proposed revision to this language was dropped in order to avoid inconsistency between board and UI policy. Second, the original proposal to the Faculty Constitution mirrored similar language in the Boise State University Faculty Constitution and included the phrase “without institutional discipline or restraint.” The new proposed policy does not include this phase. Its elimination does not narrow or limit the scope of the policy. The proposal expressively provides that faculty “may speak or write freely” regarding programs, policies and governance and therefore necessarily implies that the content of such speech and writing may not be the subject of institutional restraint or discipline.

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