



Committee on Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom

Academic Year 2020-21
March 30, 2021

The Committee on Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom (PEAF) met from last summer through this spring via WebEx. Between meetings, work was conducted via email and through subcommittee meetings.

Title IX Policy

PEAF worked closely with Caroline Laguerre-Brown, Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement on revisions to the University's Title IX policy. This was necessarily done through a truncated process: The U.S. Department of Education promulgated its revised regulations in May but required universities to come into compliance with its changes by August 14. A PEAFF subcommittee conducted an expedited review as materials were brought to its attention and provided extensive input through several meetings and ongoing email correspondence. When the PEAFF met on July 7 to consider the revised policy, it was still in draft form. We approved the revised policy in principle, pending its finalization, as the subcommittee continued to work with Vice Provost Laguerre-Brown on perfecting the policy. She provided a report to the Senate on the revised policy at its July meeting. The policy was subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees. PEAFF Co-Chair Swaine provided a report on the Title IX policy review process at the Senate's September meeting.

Given the prospect of a changed approach under the Biden administration, and updated guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, it is entirely possible that PEAFF will be re-engaged with Title IX during the 2021-22 academic year.

Intellectual Property and Digital Recording

PEAF convened a subcommittee on Recording On-Line Instruction to consider some of the concerns raised by the move to online teaching in response to the pandemic. After the subcommittee began its work, we were invited to join with the Senate Committee on Appointments, Salary, and Promotion Policies and the Senate Committee on Educational Policy and Technology in developing a *Resolution on GW Course Intellectual Property and Digital Recording*. That resolution was adopted by the Faculty Senate at its August meeting.

Code of Ethical Conduct

At the request of the FSEC Chair, PEAFF responded to an invitation from Dorinda Tucker, Associate Vice President for the Office of Ethics, Compliance & Privacy, to collaborate on the revision of the University's current Statement of Ethical Principles, which was last issued in 2006. The revised document, renamed [Code of Ethical Conduct](#), primarily organizes, references, and provides context for several other, existing codes and policies related in one way or another to ethical conduct and expectations of students, faculty and staff. (Notably, it does not provide new expectations or a new source of discipline or sanctions. This was an important consideration for the

subcommittee and the full PEAFF). The Code was approved by the Committee on Audit and Compliance of the Board of Trustees, then the full Board of Trustees, in January and February 2021, respectively.

Additional Ethics-Related Projects

The Office of Ethics, Compliance & Privacy met with a PEAFF subcommittee in March to discuss collaboration on an update to the Conflict of Interest/Commitment Policy for Faculty and Investigators, to be undertaken prior to and during the 2021-22 academic year. In addition, at the suggestion of PEAFF members, the same PEAFF subcommittee initiated consideration of whether and to what extent faculty members when engaged in academic activities should be encouraged to acknowledge sources funding their research, as well as possible disclosure of funding by University centers and institutes. The subcommittee's work was held for consideration of possible synergies with the project being undertaken by the Office of Ethics, Compliance, & Privacy, but it appears likely that it will be substantially independent of that project.

Further meetings of the subcommittee will be scheduled presently. The subcommittee contemplates future coordination with the Research Committee.

Miscellaneous Work

The committee met to consider possible amendments that would permit distance voting at virtual meetings of the Faculty Assembly, including possible amendments to the Faculty Organization Plan, the Rules of Procedure for Faculty Assembly Meetings or alternative interpretations of the existing provisions. Language was developed for further consideration by PEAFF and, ultimately, the Senate as a whole, but after consultation with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee that effort was held in abeyance for possible consideration by the Senate at the outset of the 2021-22 academic year.

During the spring semester, the PEAFF co-chairs were also engaged in providing feedback as part of the Provost's review of proposed changes by several schools to their rules.

Respectfully submitted,
Edward T. Swaine and David M. Keepnews
Co-chairs, PEAFF Committee