



### **General Counsel's Advisory Committee (GCAC)**

Minutes of Meeting 4/3/24

Circulated: 9/23/24

Approved: 9/27/24

Present: Rogério Pinto (Chair), Christopher J. Walker, Jamie Tappenden, Graham Hardig, Kirsten Herold, Silke-Maria Weineck, Tim Lynch (VP and General Counsel), Judith Walker, Adam Matzger, Alex Yasha Yi (SACUA Liaison), Sybil Biermann

Absent: Nancy Allee, Steven Chinn, Pamela Smock, Londen Ward

Faculty Senate Office: Eric Vandenberghe, Luke McCarthy

**10:31am:** Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Minutes, Announcements

The agenda was approved. The minutes for the January GCAC meeting were approved. The Chair acknowledged that this is the last meeting of the semester and provided an overview of the agenda for the meeting.

#### **Feedback on the three questions being considered by the 45-person faculty, staff, and student committee related to the Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression:**

Summary: The General Counsel reintroduced the [Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression](#) and mentioned the three questions that are being considered the committee. A point is made by a committee member that some of the issues related to protesting is exacerbated by the reaction from university administration. The discussion comes to how the committee have discussed issues over two years.

The Principles are aspirational, and the University is a work in progress. A suggestion is made to make changes to the first-year experience to address controversial topics in a way that builds the foundation for the years to come. A point is made that we need to incorporate actionable goals to make sure that the Principles are being upheld

Having diversity of thought can be difficult to express. Specific cases of related issues are shared. A discussion of the proposed Disruptive Activity Policy takes place. Different opinions are shared, with some members focusing on safety, and others focusing on protection of free speech. A point is made that in today's world, nothing can be covered up. Debate took place on protests and peacefulness, with examples from history provided.

The student perspective is given on this subject. There are many students who do not feel that their voices are being heard by the administration. Discussion went to how it is most helpful for faculty to make sure that the classroom is a good environment for open discussion.

A point is made that although some of the protests are deemed as unpleasant, unpleasantness is not violence. Opinions are given on what constitutes disruption, and how



key stakeholders should react to such disruptions.

A member voices support for the Kalven report. Different instances of campus activism are discussed. The role of faculty in navigating disruptive situations in the classroom is discussed.

The [current SPG](#) on undue interference is reviewed in conjunction with the proposed Disruptive Activity Policy. Opinions are provided throughout the meeting on this policy.

Action: Discussion

### **Concern raised on the Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression**

Summary: The quote in question is as follows: "I am concerned that university's reiteration of support of free speech seems more like a move to broaden its powers to restrict speech considering the emphasis on speech that is not disruptive, which is ambiguous as used in the statement." This statement is discussed by the committee. Specific protests and disruption are discussed. Context matters when it comes to demonstrations and protests.

Can people be heard and not prevail? The discussion comes to if administrations acknowledge but does not follow the plan a person or group desires, are still heard.

The First Amendment is discussed.

Action: Discussion

**12:03pm:** Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Vandenberghe  
Faculty Governance Coordinator  
Faculty Senate Office