DATE: April 10, 2006

TO: Suz Scharer, President, Undergraduate Student Government
    Barbara A. Pletz, President, Council of Graduate Students
    Amanda Graf, President, Inter-Professional Council

SUBJECT: Academic Freedom and Intellectual Diversity
          Processes for addressing complaints

FROM: W. Michael Sherman, Vice Provost for Academic Administration

On April 3 Provost Snyder emailed the university community a memo about the American Council on Education’s statement of principles on academic freedom and intellectual diversity. In her memo the provost reiterated Ohio State’s commitment to these principles, which are as follows:

- Academic freedom and intellectual pluralism are core principles of America’s higher education system.
- Government’s recognition and respect for independence of colleges and universities is essential for academic excellence.
- Colleges and universities should welcome diverse beliefs and the free exchange of ideas.
- Grades and other academic decisions should be based solely on considerations that are intellectually relevant to the subject matter.
- Neither students nor faculty should be disadvantaged or evaluated on the basis of their political opinions.
- Any member of the campus community who believes he or she has been treated unfairly on academic matters must have access to a clear institutional process to address grievances.

The free exchange of ideas is a foundational value of our university. As such, there are clear mechanisms for addressing the concerns of students who believe they have experienced treatment that is inconsistent with OSU’s commitment to freedom of thought and expression, respect for multiple points of view, and the civil and open discussion of these views. Here are those mechanisms:

- Students who are concerned that their grade in a course has been affected by a consideration not intellectually relevant to the subject matter should refer to the faculty rule associated with alteration of marks located at http://trustees.osu.edu/rules8/ru8-22-231.php. An undergraduate student may choose to consult an academic advisor or the Student Advocacy Center for advice on this process. A graduate student may choose to consult the graduate studies committee chair for advice on this process.

- Students who are concerned about unfair academic treatment on the basis of political opinions or other personally-held tenets or points of view should refer to the faculty rule associated with complaints against regular, regular clinical, and auxiliary faculty members located at http://trustees.osu.edu/rules5/ru5-04.php. An undergraduate student may choose to consult an academic advisor, the Student Advocacy Center, or the department chair or school director for advice on this process. A graduate student may choose to consult the graduate studies committee chair or department chair or school director for advice on this process.
I’ve attached a memo reiterating the principles of academic freedom and intellectual diversity and setting forth the remedies the university provides for those who believe they’ve been treated unfairly. We hope that you will consider distributing the attached memo to your constituents to increase their awareness of these important issues. I will be glad to serve as a resource, should you or your constituents have questions about them.