

To: W. Michael Sherman, Vice-Provost for Academic Administration

From: The Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility (CAFR)

Re: Academic Rights and Responsibilities

Date: March 9, 2006

The Office of Academic Affairs has asked the Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility to determine whether, in the Committee's opinion, the current faculty rules of the University provide appropriate and adequate outlets for students to express their concerns about their treatment in class or by a faculty member; and to make this determination in consideration of the Statement on Academic Rights and Responsibilities of the American Council on Education (June 23, 2005) and the Resolution on Academic Rights and Responsibilities of the Inter-University Council of Ohio (October 11, 2005), together with the accompanying memorandum, Communicating the Resolution to Students, from the Inter-University Council (October 11, 2005).

CAFR has reviewed the above documents, together with the current University Faculty Rules of the Ohio State University. We find much of the substance of the ACE Statement to be conveyed in the University Faculty Rules, notably in section 3335-5-01 on academic freedom and responsibility, which stands at the very beginning of those rules. Specific principles advocated in the ACE Statement are mirrored in this section as follows.

*1 principle of intellectual pluralism, free exchange of ideas, and an environment characterized by openness, tolerance, and civility:*

rule 3335-5-01 (A) states that 'The Ohio State University endorses full academic freedom as essential to attain the goal of the free search for truth and its free expression';

rule 3335-5-01 (C) (3) states the responsibility of teachers to 'Encourage students and colleagues to engage in free discussion and inquiry'; and

rule 3335-5-01 (C) (6) states the responsibility of teachers to 'Work with appropriate individuals and bodies to provide optimal conditions conducive to the attainment of the free search for truth and its free expression.'

*2 principle that academic decisions involving grades should be based solely on intellectually relevant considerations:*

rule 3335-5-01 (C) (2) states the responsibility of teachers to 'Pursue excellence, intellectual honesty, and objectivity in teaching';

rule 3335-5-01 (C) (4) states the responsibility of teachers to 'Evaluate student and colleague performance on a scholarly basis';

rule 3335-5-01 (C) (5) states the responsibility of teachers to 'Refrain from persistently introducing matters that have no bearing on the subject matter of the course'; and

rule 3335-5-01 (C) (7) states the responsibility of teachers to 'Differentiate carefully between official activities as teachers and personal activities as citizens, and to act accordingly.'

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With regard to the ACE Statement's position that '*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 by which his or her grievance can be addressed,*' University rules currently provide two avenues for such a process, as follows.

rule 3335-8-23 (Alteration of marks) clearly specifies a process for cases of alleged procedural errors, grade grievances, and charges of grave academic misconduct; and

rule 3335-5-04 (Hearing procedures for complaints against regular tenure-track, regular clinical, regular research, and auxiliary faculty members) clearly specifies a process for allegations of gross or serious incompetence and grave misconduct, and also specifies that complaints may be filed by any member of the faculty, students, post doctoral fellows, and post-professional fellows.

Based on these considerations, CAFR finds that the current University faculty rules do support essential principles of academic freedom and responsibility, and do provide a clear institutional process to address cases where a student believes those principles have been violated.