

Administrative Policies Committee Activities Report January 2021 Faculty Senate

Upon request from the Office for Institutional Equity, the Administrative Policies Committee reviewed and approved with recommended corrections GE2039 - Interim Sexual Harassment & Sexual/Gender-Based Misconduct Policy for Office for Institutional Equity.

Activities regarding the charge “Investigate faculty safety issues on campus related to student threats and report to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee”.

The committee conducted and reviewed a university faculty survey about faculty experience and perception of student threats.

The committee had a meeting with the Provost, Dean of Students, and Associate Dean of Students regarding the faculty survey.

In addition to exchanging emails, members of the committee had an extensive meeting with Darren Wibberding, (Associate Dean of Students, Office of Student Accountability) and Justin Lawhead (Dean of Students).

Based on the committee “investigations” which are ongoing, a summary of the findings has been composed (Draft Summary of University response to Student misconduct). Once the full committee has reviewed the summary, additional questions will be composed for an interview with Derek Myers (U of M Chief of Police). Pertinent results of the interview will be added to the Draft Summary. The plan is to submit the final draft to Darren Wibberding, Justin Lawhead and Derek Myers to review for possible corrections and comments. After final committee review, a summary of the University response to student misconduct related to faculty safety will be submitted to the Senate.

The committee is currently discussing the merits of the following draft motion regarding the elimination of an advisor signature for graduate school termination.

Whereas,

the current Graduate School Termination Procedure Form (<https://www.memphis.edu/gradschool/pdfs/forms/termination.pdf> Rev. Date: 8/18/2018) first requires the signature of a student advisor declaring the intent to recommend termination of a graduate student, and again in a second step declaring consultation with the graduate coordinator and then again agreeing with the department chair and graduate coordinator that the student should be terminated, the form makes it clear a student only needs to convince or coerce the Advisor to withdraw their recommendation to stop the termination. Whereas the student recruiting and department guidelines are determined by the department, the termination of a graduate student is a department responsibility which is based on reports of a student’s progress that occurs at least on an annual basis. The responsibility of the recommendation for termination should primarily rest with the department, and the current procedure can potentially put undue emphasis and pressure on the role of advisor.

Be it resolved; the Faculty Senate recommends the Graduate School Termination Procedure Form does not include the signature of a student advisor on the Graduate School Termination Procedure Form.

Committee considerations. Certainly, a graduate student advisor should provide evidence and an opinion that a student should be retained or terminated. A student may be research productive but a failure in required coursework. If the student and advisor cannot convince the department the student should be retained, the advisor's signature should not be required for a termination. If the student's course record is acceptable but research productivity is not acceptable to the advisor, or the student otherwise does not get along with the advisor, it should be the responsibility of the department to determine if the student can continue with another advisor assuming one is willing. Ultimately the department must decide if a student should be terminated from the department based on academic and research records. If a faculty signature is required, according the current procedures, the student only has to convince the advisor with either a threat or reason to rescind or otherwise not sign the Termination Procedure Form. As of January 16, 2021 the form is still on site at https://www.memphis.edu/gradschool/resources/forms_index.php. The committee is likely to make a final decision on the before the February Senate meeting. Alternatively, the motion could be considered by the Senate and amended/alterd as needed.