COMMITTEE: Academic Standards Committee

MEETING DATE: April 17, 2006

PERSON PRESIDING: George Bailey

REGULAR MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Bailey, Bass, Decker, McConnell, Richardson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Brown, Griffin, Byrd (SGA)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: see below

CALLED TO ORDER: 2 PM

__________________________________________________________

ACTIONS OF MEETING

Agenda Item: Minutes of March 20, 2006

Action Taken: approved

__________________________________________________________

Agenda Item: Consider the proposed “Student Rights” proposed by the Student Government.

Discussion: The proposed document represents the efforts of students in the Student Government Association of East Carolina University to ensure that the personal opinions and agendas of individuals in the academic environment are not inappropriately forced upon students, in particular when the opinions and agendas are irrelevant to the academic course at hand.

Action Taken: The proposed document describing and listing students’ rights was revised to reflect the importance of introducing scholarly work and basic science research into the classroom, while avoiding the introduction of topically irrelevant and personal biased opinions that are not scholarly in nature. Recognition was made of the fact that the presentation and discussion of scholarly material, and in appropriate subject matter, scientifically valid material, precludes discussion of unscholarly material that may be popularized by individuals with a biased political agenda.

The final revised document, verbatim as approved by the Academic Standards Committee, including the title of the document, is as follows:

Student Academic Rights

I. The Mission of the University.

The central purposes of a University are the pursuit of truth, the discovery of new knowledge through scholarship and research, the study and reasoned criticism of intellectual and cultural traditions, the teaching and general development of students to help them become creative individuals and productive citizens of a diverse democracy, and the transmission of knowledge and learning to a society at large. Free inquiry and free speech within the academic community are indispensable to the achievement of these goals. The freedom to learn depend upon the creation of appropriate conditions and opportunities on the campus as a whole as well as in the classrooms and lecture halls. These purposes reflect the values -- diversity, opportunity, critical thinking, openness and fairness -- that are the cornerstones of American society.

II. Academic Freedom

1. The Concept. Academic freedom and intellectual diversity are values indispensable to the American university. From its first formulation in the General Report of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the American Association of University Professors, the concept of academic freedom has been premised on the idea that human knowledge is a never-ending pursuit of the truth, that there is no humanly accessible truth that is not in principle open to challenge, and that no party or intellectual faction has a monopoly on wisdom. Therefore, academic freedom is most likely to thrive in an environment of intellectual diversity that protects and fosters independence of thought and speech. In the words of the General Report, it is vital to protect "as the first condition of progress, [a] complete and unlimited freedom topursue inquiry and publish its results."
Because free inquiry and its fruits are crucial to the democratic enterprise itself, academic freedom is a national value as well. In a historic 1967 decision (Keyishian v. Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York) the Supreme Court of the United States overturned a New York State loyalty provision for teachers with these words: “Our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, [a] transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned.” In Sweezy v. New Hampshire, (1957) the Court observed that the “essentiality of freedom in the community of American universities [was] almost self-evident.”

2. The Practice. Academic freedom consists of protecting the intellectual independence of professors, researchers and students in the pursuit of knowledge and the expression of ideas from inappropriate interference by legislators or authorities within the institution itself. This means that, beyond a commitment to diversity and democracy, no political, ideological or religious orthodoxy will be imposed on students. Nor shall legislatures impose any such orthodoxy through their control of the university budget.

This protection includes students. From the first statement on academic freedom, it has been recognized that intellectual independence means the protection of students from the inappropriate imposition of any orthodoxy of a political, religious or ideological nature. The 1915 General Report admonished faculty to avoid “taking unfair advantage of the student’s immaturity by indoctrinating him with the teacher’s own opinions before the student has had an opportunity fairly to examine other opinions upon the matters in question, and before he has sufficient knowledge and ripeness of judgment to be entitled to form any definitive opinion of his own.” In 1967, the AAUP’s Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students reinforced and amplified this injunction by affirming the inseparability of “the freedom to teach and freedom to learn.” In the words of the report, “Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion.” Students are, however, expected to master the content of their courses.

Therefore, to secure the intellectual independence of students, the following principles and procedures shall be observed.

1. A student’s grade in a course shall not be affected by his or her political or religious beliefs or activities, sexual preferences, or anything else that is not part of the course subject matter approved by the University Curriculum Committee.

2. Course curricula should provide students with alternative scholarly viewpoints where appropriate. While teachers are and should be free to pursue their own findings and perspectives in presenting their views, they should consider and make their students aware of other viewpoints. Academic disciplines should welcome a variety of valid, scholarly approaches, given the research methods appropriate to the discipline the course is in.

3. Student Government Association election of speakers, allocation of funds for speakers programs and other student activities will observe the principle of academic freedom and promote a variety of points of view.

4. An environment conducive to the civil exchange of ideas being an essential component of a free university, the obstruction of invited campus speakers, destruction of campus literature or other effort to obstruct this exchange will not be tolerated.

5. Knowledge advances when individual scholars are left free to reach their own conclusions about which methods, facts, and theories have been validated by research. Academic institutions and professional societies formed to advance knowledge within an area of research, maintain the integrity of the research process, and organize the professional lives of related researchers serve as indispensable venues within which scholars circulate research findings and debate their interpretation. To perform these functions adequately, academic institutions and professional societies should maintain a posture of organizational neutrality with respect to the substantive disagreements that divide researchers on questions within their fields of inquiry.

Op. cit., p. 50

Agenda Item: In-state residence requirements.
Discussion: Facts were presented to the ASC comparing the in-state residency requirements of ECU compared to several other NC state universities. ECU compared very favorably to the other institutions and, if anything, the in-state residency requirements of ECU were requiring as much or slightly more academic time and performance than several sister institutions.

Action Taken: Recommend that there be no change in in-state residency requirements for credit hours for ECU.

ADJOURNED: 3:30 pm

NEXT MEETING: Academic year 2006-2007!

ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED: To be determined