

Michigan Conference Workshop on the Implementation of Committee A Standards

Case Studies

During the workshop on October 30, participants will divide into smaller groups to discuss the three situations discussed below. Each case describes a situation that could arise on any campus. The groups will be asked to answer three questions about each of the problems that have been brought to your attention. Is there additional information that you need to know about the situation, and, if so, what is it? What AAUP policies and standards seem to be implicated? What is your next step as a chapter or conference officer?

1. You receive a call from Professor Patricia Plum, who tells you that she has just been denied tenure. She goes on to say that she was told by her dean that the reason for the tenure denial is her behavior as a colleague. In response to your question, Plum describes several grievances she had filed against her department chair involving course assignments. She expresses concern that she is being denied tenure for reasons that violate her academic freedom. She also tells you that the dean has raised the possibility that during her terminal year of service she will be on leave of absence at full pay.
2. Professor Frederick Wiggin-Pohl reaches you late one evening at your home. He tells you that he is a tenured faculty member who met that afternoon with the academic vice president and was notified that two students have brought sexual harassment charges against him. The vice president, Wiggin-Pohl reports, declined to give him the names of the students but described the substance of their complaints, which involve allegations that Wiggin-Pohl discussed his sexual activities with them in his campus office. Wiggin-Pohl states that he denied wrongdoing of any sort. The vice president told him, however, that he believes the student complaints are credible and warrant consideration by a hearing body. In the meantime, Wiggin-Pohl tells you that he has been suspended from his classroom duties pending the results of the hearing.
3. You receive a memorandum from Professors Herman Silverheels, Ramona Thistlewaite, and Bonifant Luce, newly elected officers of the faculty senate. They describe steps the administration plans to take to reduce or discontinue several academic programs, and the likelihood that faculty appointments will be terminated. Silverheels, Thistlewaite, and Luce are in departments expressly designated for reduction or discontinuance. The memorandum states that, while the institution's finances are not strong, they are not so parlous as to require the release of faculty members, that the administration's true motive is to weaken, if not destroy, the faculty senate, and that the campus faculty regulations appear to give the administration virtually unfettered discretion to make decisions about terminating faculty appointments for financial or programmatic reasons.