

## **DEVELOPING A UNIVERSITY POLICY ON BULLYING**

### **Report for the November 4, 2019 Faculty Senate Executive Council**

*Prepared by Beauvais Lyons, Chair of the Faculty Affairs Committee*

Below is a recent chronology of efforts by the Faculty Senate to develop a policy on bullying. It seems especially timely to address this issue in the context of the [recent anti-bullying t-shirt campaign promoted by UT](#).

#### 2017 OMBUDSPERSON REPORT:

Two years ago, on November 20, 2017 the Faculty Senate received a [report from Faculty Ombudsperson Bill Nugent](#) that included a recommendation that a policy on bullying be added to the Faculty Handbook.

#### WORK BY FACULTY AFFAIRS

Last year the Faculty Senate Faculty Affairs Committee pursued this task, with committee members Nathalie Hristov and Todd Freeberg reviewing handbook language from several universities and developing draft language. There was some discussion about the challenges of defining bullying. As there were a great number of other handbook tasks last year, this issue is now on our committee's goals for 2019-2020. Below is the current status of the draft, developed as part of the section of "Professional Conduct," which is the product of several lengthy meetings and discussions and which was shared with the Provost's office.

#### **2.2.5 Professional Conduct**

**Within the university, faculty members will treat colleagues, staff, and students with respect and fairness. They will listen to the views of others, work constructively as members of the diverse academic community, and safeguard the recognition of achievements of others, including those in subordinate positions. Faculty honesty in financial and personal matters is expected. Beyond the university, individual faculty members are representatives of the university to the wider community, which they will treat with respect and fairness.**

##### **2.2.5.1 Academic Bullying**

**The University of Tennessee is committed to providing a community where students, faculty, staff, and guests are safe from bullying behavior. This policy establishes university standards for prevention of workplace bullying and prescribes standard measures and procedures for responding to bullying behavior or to complaints of bullying. Through a combination of emphasis, accountability, training, and systematic response, the University of Tennessee intends to deter bullying acts and behavior and to provide timely response when incidents of bullying occur.**

**The University of Tennessee will not tolerate bullying behavior directed toward any member of the university community or to any person on university property.**

**Bullying: Bullying is behavior that:**

- **directed towards an individual or group;**
- **is repeated;**
- **is hostile or offensive; and,**
- **creates an intimidating and/or threatening environment that causes psychological, professional, and/or physical harm.**

**Bullying behavior may take many forms, including physical, verbal, or written acts (including texting and social media). It may also involve egregious abuse of power, and/or excluding behavior, such as ignoring, dismissing, or ostracizing individuals or groups.**

**Hostile behavior includes behavior that is harmful or damaging to an individual and/or property. This may include tampering, damaging, or destroying a person's work output; and/or making false statements verbally or in writing. Behavior that is intimidating, threatening, disruptive, humiliating, or vicious may also constitute hostile behavior.**

**Offensive behavior may include abusive language, derogatory remarks, insults, or epithets. Other offensive behavior may include the use of condescending, humiliating, or vulgar language, swearing, shouting or unsuitable language, obscene gestures, or mocking.**

**University employees, students, and guests have a responsibility to behave in a respectful manner. Instances of bullying should be reported.**

Vice-Provost Zomchick thought the proposed language was too broad, and might not stand a legal test. While this is understandable, the qualification that such behavior is "repeated" is an important principle reflected in the draft language.

Through an electronic vote, the committee amended and approved a resolution for which Natalie Hristov was the lead author on bullying for consideration by the Faculty Senate in November.

#### **TASK FORCE FORMED**

In late summer Vice-Provost Zomchick initiated a task force on bullying co-chaired by Mary Lucal (human Resources), and Lisa Yamagata-Lynch, Ombudsperson, that will look at policies and procedures and other relevant topics related to bullying. Two sub-committees, one chaired by Joan Heminway, will address education efforts around the issue. The other, co-chaired by Lisa Yamagata-Lynch and Mary Lucal, will look at policies and procedures and other relevant topics related to policies and procedures.

Members include:

Mary Lucal (co-chair)

Lisa Yamagata-Lynch (co-chair)

Joan Heminway

Susan Pritchard

Kimberly Hardaway

Jenny Richter

Natalie Hristov

Todd Freeberg

Stefanie Benjamin

Sharon Couch

Erin Darby

Leticia Flores

Mitsunori Misawa

Jennifer Jabson-Tree

The task force has had difficulty in scheduling a meeting, and is not slated to meet until December 11<sup>th</sup>. The Provost will charge the group when they hold their first meeting.

Coordinated by Joan Heminway, with the assistance of Stefanie Benjamin and Jennifer Jabson-Tree, there will be scheduled workshops on Bully-Free Workplaces to be held in March 4-6, 2020 [tentative dates]. The co-sponsors will include the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement, the Commissions for Blacks, LGBTP, Women, Council for Diversity and Interculturalism, and HR. The Teaching and Innovation Center that will take care of organizing a webcasting for the keynote speech.

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