

# Faculty discusses issues about academic freedom

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An estimated 80 members of the full-time faculty gathered last Thursday to discuss issues surrounding academic freedom.

The meeting, declared private by Faculty President Hugo Grimaldi, because of discussions regarding the contracts of faculty members, lasted for an hour, but the discussion on academic freedom took an estimated 15 minutes, leaving some instructors frustrated and confused.

While the discussion of academic freedom affects the faculty as a whole, only full time faculty members were allowed to attend—causing frustration for some part time faculty members.

When asked about his decision to exclude the part-time members from the discussion, Grimaldi responded briefly, "[The part-time faculty] have their own governing body. They have their own president. It wasn't meant to exclude anybody."

In the faculty contract, Article 14: ACADEMIC & PERSONAL FREEDOM, paragraph one reads, "Instructors are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing the subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matters which have no relation to their subjects."

"It's very simple," noted Grimaldi. "If [what an instruc-

tor says] is in relation to the context of the class then it's okay."

When asked whether he feels that Dr. Epstein's comments regarding homosexuality in a Judaic Studies class in January were in relation to the class, the president of the faculty replied that he believed they were.

"It appears that they were in context to the class," said Grimaldi. "In discussing the history of Judaism, I believe that it was."

Grimaldi believes that the purpose of the meeting was to educate the faculty on their rights outlined in the union body's contract with the college. The business instructor feels that it was a success.

"It's an education issue for us all," said Grimaldi, speaking about the campus-wide debate over academic freedom. "[We] needed to educate ourselves as to what the limits are in the classroom. What needs to happen now is

for the entire campus to be educated. There needs to be open discussion, open meeting. Students and instructors alike need to be educated on this issue."

Some instructors believe they should be able to make statements and voice ideas within the context of the class.

"The faculty should be able to say anything pertinent in the context of the class," said Loren Ford, social science instructor. "I would hope it doesn't get misinterpreted



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Librarian Doris Munson, an OEA consultant and Faculty President Hugo Grimaldi discuss the faculty senate meeting held last Thursday, about academic freedom.

where students are concerned."

Many of the faculty were aggravated at the direction that the meeting took. They felt there was still a decision that needed to be reached.

"Students and faculty need to find an in between," said Ford. "What constitutes academic freedom? This is where we need a middle ground."

Some instructors agree with the action of clarifying the rights of students and faculty; however, they also feel that they should be free to teach without being told what to teach.

"I don't want to be censoring everything I say," said Ford.

Many instructors noted that the Epstein matter and the "Two Popes Boinking" art exhibit were partly the catalysts for the academic freedom meeting. Some felt Epstein's early retirement did not

need to happen; some disagree.

"Don Epstein did not have to retire; he chose to retire," said Terence Shumaker, drafting instructor.

Many of the faculty agree that that there should be a balance between student and faculty rights without being overly zealous about one or the other.

"We don't need to be rabid about academic freedom. But we also don't need to be rabid about students' rights," said Ford.

One faculty member felt there may be a difference in views about academic freedom depending on how long instructors have taught here.

"The new faculty is concerned with what they can or can't say. The older folks have very little to worry about with freedom of speech. We should have the right to disagree," said Jeff Molatore, faculty senate member.

"We're looking at bringing up a lot of issues," said David Campbell, vice president of the faculty.

"We hope to make this an open forum; to have wider representation from students, administration and classified part-time staff," added Campbell.

Some faculty members have decided that the solution to the debate on academic freedom is to keep talking.

"I think the best thing is that the conversation dialogue is open," said Shumaker.

When asked if they would like to promote an open forum, which would include students, staff, part-time staff, administration and classified staff, some faculty agreed it would be something to campaign for.

"We'd certainly like to encourage that down the road," said Shumaker.

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Loren Ford  
social science instructor

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