

Comments

I find it very difficult to follow what happened exactly, hence my abstention. But allow me to express three grave concerns. 1. I'm worried about the undermining of faculty governance by university and college leadership over the years. 2. I'm worried about the low thresholds of evidence under titles VI and IX. There is insufficient due process for defendants. 3. I'm worried almost nobody in this conversation actually cares about free speech. Most seem to want to protect speech that favors their views and to restrict speech that goes against their views. I'm upset about what seem like efforts to prevent senate votes through motions to table or interventions to forcibly revise motions. Let us please support free speech for real, and allow the senate to vote!

However the term "condemn" is not constructive. Whatever the outcome, the Provost should be thanked for engaging with the Senate on the issue.

I disagree with the administration's overriding the decision of the faculty committee and the selective and I would say manipulative use of evidence from the case. The forum did not feel like a respectful conversation between faculty and administrators, but a show of power among administrators who presented the case as obvious, when it was clearly complicated. These are challenging times for all. Let's treat each other with more dignity than this.

From the discussion, there are significant issues that need to be addressed in both the protocols and processes that were followed. In addition, there is significant concern about administration overreach, lack of transparency, and clear sharing of priorities in this difficult time where positions are not being refilled, individuals are being removed based on unclear metrics, and communication is not specific and delivered in code that does not make expectations clear.

The sponsors have failed at the most basic level to demonstrate any way in which university policy was violated. Further, this resolution functionally says that the Cornell University Faculty believe that discrimination against students is required for academic freedom to be achieved.

I can only hope that we do not pass this flawed measure.

Comments

I am abstaining not due to lack of interest/concern or from following the recent conversations. I have strong concerns about current limits to academic freedom. However, I cannot discern the line between the way our policy was followed and legal challenges this case brought up. My ultimate sense is that this process has unveiled limitations with the policy in its current form and that the policy should be amended to prevent this in the future.

I would support a resolution to clarify the procedures.

My name still appears as a faculty co-sponsor, despite my removing it from the Google doc.

Though I believe these policies require evaluation and potential revision, I do not believe there are grounds for censure of the central administration.

At a time when the university needs to pull together and figure out a way of the unprecedented financial crisis we face, this resolution not only is based on a misinterpretation of the facts but has taken up way too much of the Senate's time.

I personally don't think that either side has the upper hand in this case, but I have voted in accord with my department's majority sentiment.

Comments

Though the resolution isn't perfect (e.g. I would in retrospect favor deleting the pen-ultimate "Whereas"), I support it.

I sympathize with the procedural aspect of the resolution. However, it is important that we do not conflate this with this discrimination case. The provost has the right to act in this situation. What is clear to me is that the faculty senate should consider amending Cornell Policy 6.4 to be consistent with federal law. This will reduce the likelihood of this type of conflict in the future.

This resolution should be split into two resolutions: 1) Whether the administration violated Cornell Faculty Handbook Section 6.6 and 2) Whether the administration violated Cornell University Policy 6.4. Each of these two motions requires different types and assessments of evidence about the process and findings. Joining them into one resolution means that any support of one validates the other, and that may not be true when they could each be evaluated on their own.

The resolutions de facto justified professor Cheyfitz's behavior. There is not a single word acknowledging his responsibility or recognizing that what he did constitutes a major threat to academic freedom.

Do not have enough information regarding the complaint and Senate's committee findings.

I am voting "abstain" on this resolution. I am not in favor of repeated incendiary resolutions encouraging an antagonistic relationship between the faculty (senate) and the central administration. I think it's an unfair and unproductive stance from which to base our interactions.

However, I also don't approve of the central administration's handling of this situation. In their statements to the faculty senate they have focused on revealing limited aspects of the case against Prof. Cheyfitz, implying that the AFPSF committee was wrong in their finding. It's insulting and ridiculous to imply that 6 faculty members unanimously reached an obviously wrong conclusion when they had access to all the specifics of the case.

University counsel also implied that the university policies are in contravention to federal law. I cannot believe that decades of university counsel approved university policies that are actually illegal. Current counsel may not like the compromises in the policy and may wish the policy was different, but it would be the grossest incompetence for previous counsels to agree to actually illegal policy.

As many others have said, clarifying university policies should be a high priority right now.

Comments

As department representative for the Communication Department, I am choosing to abstain. After a survey of the faculty, a substantial number of faculty in the department expressed support for this motion. Others expressed general support for some parts of the resolution if certain details or the tone of the resolution could have been amended. A small percentage opposed the resolution entirely.

As a Senator, I found myself in the awkward position of receiving substantial new information about the factual claims of the motion without the ability to propose amendments based on that information, before the vote. I am personally concerned that if the resolution is passed, the official Senate record could include some potentially good faith inaccuracies that would then be reported on widely in the news.

I encourage that my abstention be interpreted as a strong sign that whatever the details of the Cheyfitz case, a substantial number of faculty in my department do not believe the policies are clear and consistent enough as stated, or implemented clearly and consistently enough by the responsible parties. As a result, many faculty in the department do not have confidence that students' right to learn and academic freedom will be consistently and appropriately adjudicated when they come into tension in the future.

We don't have the full picture and the discussion made it clear to me that the issue is the relevant policies are not written in a way that makes them easy to interpret. Lets fix the policy language and assume Eric's own lawyers have addressed the specific matters of this topic.

Not the finest day for the central administration...

The discussions in email have been helpful (if not a bit overwhelming to read through and consider in full) but still leave me trying to understand the actual facts and which are most relevant to the resolution as written. I would like to see the Senate find ways to have longer discussion in a FS meeting on resolutions where there is so much nuance and thoughts that senators would like to have aired, before a vote is called. Thank you.

Comments

In my opinion, this motion should not have been brought forward. The whereas clauses contain factual errors, as demonstrated during the Oct. 22 debate, and the concern raised about whether we are harassing the student by essentially rejecting their complaint, despite what seems to be evidence that the professor expelled him from class not for being disruptive but instead on the basis of nationality are very troubling to me. I am saddened that the student's identity was revealed against his wishes, and very sorry that he has been harassed, and would not in any sense wish to add to that unfair burden. My colleagues and I believe that we teach in an institution "where any student is welcome to pursue any study." And we believe this would include an Israeli student who wished to attend Eric Cheyfitz's course.

While there is a lot of technical/procedural information to sort through and a lot of conflicting information about what transpired last semester between Cheyfitz, the student on whose behalf the university made a complaint, and the other students in the class, my understanding is that the core issue is whether the faculty senate committee finding was engaged with according to established procedure, and I don't think that it was, based on all of the information that has now been made available. I'm therefore voting in support of the resolution.

I voted no on the resolution primarily because I remain unable to assess the conflicting interpretations of the underlying facts. I am heartened that the debate on this has been so vigorous and informative, because the questions raised are so central to our mission.

This incident has made plain that Policy 6.4 needs revision, in order to be consistent with federal law and to have a single, clear process. While I cannot support the motion as written, I wish to advocate for this reform, with the input of faculty and the Faculty Senate.