Section I

**Name of Committee:** Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure

**Submitted by:** Jill Theresa Messing, Chair, School of Social Work, Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, Downtown Campus

**Date Submitted:** April 25, 2022

**Membership Roster:**

Majia Nadesan, West Campus, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Pamela Swan, Downtown Campus, Health Solutions  
Aaron Hess, Downtown Campus, Languages and Cultures  
Xihong Peng, Polytechnic Campus, Department of Physics  
Angelica Afanador Pujol, Tempe Campus, School of Art  
Marco Janssen, Tempe Campus, School of Sustainability  
Aya Matsuda, Tempe Campus, Department of English  
Alan Gomez, Tempe Campus, School of Social Transformation  
Rida Bazzi, Tempe Campus, School of Computing, Informatics, and Decisions Systems Engineering  
Shawn Jordan, Polytechnic Campus, Sch EGR Prgms  
Kristin Mickelson, West Campus, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

**Overview Narrative:**

The following summarizes committee work accomplished throughout this past year:

During AY 2021-22 the chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure (CAFT) also chaired the Grievance Clearinghouse Committee (GCC). There were four new cases presented and no cases were carried over from AY 2020-2021. Of the four cases presented, two were forwarded to the Ombudsperson Committee at the request of the Grievant, one was dismissed after a request for further information from the Grievant received no response, and one is pending.
Section II
Grievance Cases Assigned to CAFT:
There were no grievance cases assigned to CAFT.

Grievance Cases Pending as of April 25, 2022:
At this time (April 24, 2022), there is one grievance case pending which has not been assigned by GCC to either CAFT or GGC.

Section III
Item to carry-over into AY 2022-23:
At this time (April 24, 2022), there is one grievance case pending which has not been assigned by GCC to either CAFT or GGC but may carry over into AY 2022-2023.

Section IV
Recommendations to the Senate or Final Comments
Academic freedom is crucial and is of utmost importance to the intellectual health of the university; it must be clearly understood in concept and scope. It may be helpful for CAFT to develop some guidance to help faculty members understand what constitutes academic freedom. Arbitrary, irresponsible, or incompetent administrative actions rarely rise to the level of academic freedom. Claims of discrimination are properly before the Office of University Rights and Responsibility. While these issues should be redressed through the proper channels, they do not fall under the purview of CAFT.

With regard to tenure and promotion decisions, grievance committees do not have jurisdiction to evaluate the substance of a faculty member’s original case. CAFT developed some standard language to assist grievants in understanding that grievance committees may hear cases where an allegedly material substantive policy or procedural violation may have occurred. For an alleged violation to be material, it must have had an impact on the outcome of the case. The relief available for a policy or procedure violation is for the matter to be sent back to the level at which the violation allegedly occurred.

Unit promotion and tenure criteria should be reviewed carefully by faculty. Examples included in tenure and promotion criteria, even when clearly labeled as examples, may be interpreted by administrators (or faculty) at various levels of review as requirements. It is particularly disconcerting when administrators and faculty have consistently different interpretations of stated promotion and tenure criteria throughout the review process. While independent review at all levels is required, it is difficult to identify what constitutes an independent review.