

Academic Freedom and Ethics Committee Annual Report to the Faculty Senate

2025-2026 Academic Year
May 22, 2025

Committee Purpose

The [Academic Freedom and Ethics Committee](#) investigates complaints of violations of academic freedom. They also consider questions of ethical conduct of academic or administrative faculty.

Committee Membership & Vacancies

Unit	Representative
University Libraries	Andrea Wirth (chair)
Administrative Faculty	Paysha Rhone
School of Business	Nadia Pomirleanu
College of Education	Travis Olson
College of Engineering	Hal Berghel
College of Fine Arts	Kirsten Brandt
Division of Health Sciences	Emmanuel Ayim
College of Hospitality	Christine Bergman
College of Liberal Arts	Abigail Aguilar
College of Sciences	Kaushik Ghosh
College of Urban Affairs	Nicholas Barr
School of Dental Medicine	Vacant
Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at UNLV	Vacant
William S. Boyd School of Law	Vacant

Meetings & Attendance

The committee met monthly from September 2025 through May 2026. The December and May meetings were considered optional. Of the 11 filled positions, we had two members on

sabbatical fall semester. A new member was added in October. Attendance as a percentage of available members was as follows:

September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May
100%	100%	100%	56%	100%	100%	73%	55%	37%

Recommendation: We hope that Faculty Senate leadership and the senators from the relevant units continue to encourage participation from the law, medicine, and dental schools.

Petitions

The committee did not receive any complaints or petitions this year.

Recommendation: Both the committee and Senate continue to improve awareness of the committee's purpose among faculty and administrators.

Projects & Activities

The committee did not receive a charge from the Faculty Senate. Therefore, members identified issues for discussion and action. The committee also invited guests to the meeting and developed a resource list to inform our activities.

The chair gave a presentation at the December Faculty Senate Meeting in order to share the committee's purpose, function, and processes with the Senate and faculty. The related [Presentation slides](#) have been added to the committee's website.

The New Faculty Orientation was also identified as an outreach mechanism to explore.

Recommendation: The Senate and committee work together to improve communication and collaboration between them, such as by occasional invitations to present to the Senate.

Motions & Recommendations Made to the Faculty Senate

AI policy, submitted February 13, 2026

"The Academic Freedom and Ethics Committee members move that the Faculty Senate take a proactive role in establishing a generative AI policy for UNLV based on informed faculty consent."

Closed Faculty Senate sessions, submitted May 8, 2026

Premise: We hold it obvious that university faculty are justifiably concerned about any practice or activity within the university to hold secret discussions relating to the policies and governance of the institution because of the potential of using such practices or activities for withholding information that is inconsistent with the university's mission, principles, or values. This assumes, as has been suggested, that the Faculty Senate's use of closed sessions is legal and consistent with the spirit of the Nevada open meeting law.

Therefore, the AF&E committee recommends that this issue be brought before the general faculty in an appropriate venue to achieve a consensus of the faculty. Specifically, we feel that questions like those below should be addressed:

- What are the justifications for the use of Faculty Senate closed sessions?
- Are such justifications sufficient to merit the denial of organizational and public transparency?
- Even if consistent with Nevada law governing public institutions, should the Faculty Senate be allowed to conduct closed sessions?
- If closed sessions are to be allowed, to whom should these sessions be closed?
- What precautions must be enabled to ensure that closed sessions are not used to protect/shield misconduct, bias, discrimination, or other patterns of behavior that are inconsistent with the principles of the university and the public welfare?

Recommendations on both submissions: Faculty Senate leadership follow up with the committee to address questions and identify next steps.

Meeting Guests

November

A faculty member who is also a lawyer joined the committee by invitation to discuss the University Administration email titled “[Updated] Guidance on Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and Responsibilities” sent November 4, 2025.

March

Michael Kagan, Incoming Senate Chair and Joyce Mack Professor of Law/Director, UNLV Immigration Clinic, joined the committee to discuss the issues and concerns of the committee and Senate.

Resources

These were compiled by several members of the committee as resources relevant to the topics discussed throughout the year.

1. [Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters](#). Explore the meaning of academic freedom and how it relates to core higher education and societal values. University of Oslo. Free if course taken within three weeks.
2. [Higher Education Webinar: Academic Freedom and Democracy](#)/ Council On Foreign Relations. Leo Spitz Distinguished Service Professor of International Law and Faculty Director, Forum for Free Inquiry and Expression. University of Chicago
3. [Academic Freedom Basics](#) AAUP. Presenter Greg Scholtz is director of the AAUP's Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance.
4. [Critical Perspectives in AI education](#) Explore the educational landscape amidst the uncritical adoption of “AI” tools, and the implications for faculty, students, college campuses, and beyond. Series by the CSUSB Faculty Association.

5. AAUP [upcoming events](#), [past events](#) (much of this is member-only content, one route to membership is through the Nevada Faculty Alliance).
6. [FIRE Free Speech focused resources](#)
7. [Scholars at Risk Events](#). UNLV is a member per Faculty Affairs.

This report is respectfully submitted to Maria Roberts, outgoing Faculty Senate Chair and Michael Kagan, incoming Faculty Senate Chair.

Andrea Wirth, on behalf of the 2025-2026 members of the Academic Freedom & Ethics Committee