

**Queensborough Community College
Academic Senate**

Date: 12/15/2004

To: Ken Pearl, Secretary, Steering Committee
From: Philip Pecorino, UFS representative, for QCC
Subject: Report on UFS Fall Conference Defining and Defending Academic Freedom" (12-3-04)

The conference featured:

1) Robert M. O'Neil,
Director of the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression and an authority on the First Amendment. He also chairs the special AAUP Committee on Academic Freedom and National Security.

2)Matthew W. Finkin, University of Illinois College of Law, Chair of the AAUP Investigating Committee on the CUNY administration's handling of the Mohammed Yousry case,who commented on the case in the context of earlier AAUP investigations of CUNY academic freedom and due process cases.

3)Workshops on specific AAUP cases and policy issues:

- Violations of academic freedom: political activism and affiliation?
- Violations of academic freedom: extramural utterance and/or disruption?
- Violations of academic freedom: autocratic actions/violations of due process?
- Do adjuncts have academic freedom at CUNY?
- Should CUNY's academic freedom policy be updated?

4) There was also a CCNY digital exhibit on Rapp-Coudert hearings concerning CUNY Faculty and violations of Academic Freedom in the late 30's.

5) from memorandum from Susan O'Malley, Chair, UFS

"...It is evident almost daily from the newspapers that serious charges of academic freedom violations are becoming increasingly common, from Columbia University, to the University of South Florida, to Metro State College in Denver. Thus the University Faculty Senate has tried in the past several years to raise awareness of the challenges posed by the post-9/11 environment for the protection of free speech and the freedom of ideas at the nation's universities. Most academics of course have long held that the best way to fight poisonous speech or ideas is to bring them out into the light of day -- encourage more speech and more thinking in the belief that truth will then prevail.

The conference also heard an address by Matthew Finkin, Esq., about the history of AAUP censure cases at CUNY over the years, and particularly about the current case of Mohammad Yousry, an adjunct at York College who was removed from teaching because he was indicted for allegedly providing support to convicted terrorist Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman. A separate resource for those interested in this case is the AAUP investigative report chaired by Finkin and the response of CUNY's General Counsel Frederick Schaffer to that report, which are available at www.AAUP.Org (path starts with Academic Freedom), or email the UFS office to request a copy (wepbh@cunyvm.cuny.edu).

Participants last Friday also attended workshops in a number of areas to explore the boundaries of academic freedom, using case studies including political activism, extramural utterances, autocratic actions, and the special case of adjuncts. Attention was also given to the adequacy of CUNY's current policy, which has not been updated since 1946. It was decided that the UFS Academic Freedom Committee should attempt to expound all dimensions of the policy and to consider better ways of implementing it, particularly concerning non-contractual issues."