



University of Pittsburgh

Office of the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

801 Cathedral of Learning
4200 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
412-624-4223
Fax: 412-383-9640

Patricia E. Beeson
Provost
Senior Vice Chancellor

August 24, 2015

Dear Colleagues:

I would like to begin by thanking members of the Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee for their careful review of the issue of academic freedom and the electronic media. The report approved by the Faculty Assembly at its February 10, 2015 meeting and transmitted to me on August 13, 2015, is a thoughtful consideration of the complex issues that have arisen in recent years as technology has opened many new forms of communication. The compilation of best practices in this area that was forwarded with the report, will serve as a useful guide to all of us on the appropriate uses of technology. I will share both with the Council of Deans and will ask my office to work with the Senate to discuss additional ways to effectively communicate the recommendations to our faculty.

While the Committee unanimously agreed that the existing policies on academic freedom at the University of Pittsburgh are strong and do not need to be revised, they also felt it important to specifically acknowledge that these policies extend to forms of communication that were not widely used or in existence when the policies were created. I agree completely. The University of Pittsburgh has a deep and abiding commitment to safeguarding the academic freedom of its faculty as a bedrock institutional value. Over the years, this commitment has been publicly reiterated through several statements explicitly addressing academic freedom, such as Provost Emeritus Jim Maher's 2002 letter to the University community concerning the Environmental Law Clinic, and the 2003 statement on academic freedom produced by the ad hoc Committee on Academic Freedom.

I am pleased to join the Senate Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee and the Faculty Assembly in affirming that the same principles of academic freedom outlined in the statements referenced above hold for all methods of communication used in teaching and scholarship, including electronic media.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia E. Beeson".

Patricia E. Beeson