



Committee on Professional Responsibility, Revisited

RES 242524

FAC

RESOLVED: The following changes be made to the University Handbook (additions in **bold underline**, deletions in **strikethrough**).

308.8 Alleged Breaches of Professional Responsibility

The fundamental purpose of the statement of professional responsibility in Appendix F is to establish a guide for responsible performance that is consistent with the highest ideals of the academic profession. It thus establishes an ideal to which faculty members can and should aspire, rather than a minimum standard to which faculty members must adhere. Hence, the statement is not intended to serve primarily as a reference for disciplinary action. Nevertheless, when cases of gross disregard for principles of professional responsibility occur, the faculty has both a right and a duty to call the breach to the attention of the individual concerned and to expect that the irresponsible behavior will be discontinued.

Most departures from responsible professional behavior are likely to be minor breaches that can be corrected simply by calling the matter to the attention of the person involved.

Ordinarily, such matters are handled within the faculty member's academic unit **or with the Dean**. The faculty member may also consult the Faculty Ombudsperson for informal conflict resolution or may proceed to formal procedures.

If a breach of professional responsibility is alleged that cannot be or is not adequately handled informally within the basic academic unit, **with the Dean**, or with the Faculty Ombudsperson, The matter may be referred to the **AVP for Faculty Affairs, and the faculty member may consult with the California Faculty Association**. Committee on Professional Responsibility. Any member of the academic community may refer allegations of unprofessional conduct to this Committee. Such allegations shall be submitted in writing and signed by the person making the complaint.

The procedures described in this section provide a formal process whereby faculty members can resolve disputes regarding professional responsibility without resorting to a disciplinary

Academic Senate

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process. It is expected that in most instances, the weight of an adverse conclusion by the Committee on Professional Responsibility will bring about a correction of irresponsible behavior.

303.8.1 Committee on Professional Responsibility Membership

Members of the Committee on Professional Responsibility are elected with special attention to the high ethical and professional regard in which their colleagues hold them. The Committee consists of five (5) tenured faculty members, one elected by the faculty of each school college and an at-large member elected by the General Faculty, including counselors or librarians. Committee members serve overlapping two-year terms.

Additional tenured faculty members may be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate in an effort to ensure representation of the entire university. All members should achieve the highest professional standards and be examples of excellence.

A committee member who has a conflict of interest in a particular case shall recuse himself or herself. In that instance, the Senate Executive Committee shall appoint a substitute. The appointed member shall represent the constituency of the replaced member.

303.8.2 Augmentation to the Committee for Librarians or Counselors

When a librarian or counselor is referred, the Committee shall be augmented by a librarian or counselor, respectively, who is elected by the members of the appropriate unit. The role of the librarian or counselor is limited to providing advice and feedback to the Committee regarding specific issues and questions pertaining to the profession. The librarian or counselor does not vote as a member of the Committee.

Purpose of the Committee on Professional Responsibility

The Committee on Professional Responsibility serves as a resource and advisory body dedicated to fostering a culture of professionalism, collegiality, and continuous growth among faculty. It balances conflict resolution, faculty development, and professional accountability through proactive engagement, structured guidance, and meaningful collaboration with campus partners.

The Committee on Professional Responsibility is committed to fostering a proactive and supportive faculty development culture by formalizing mentorship processes and enhancing professional development opportunities. The committee will establish structured mentorship programs to help faculty navigate professional challenges and

obstacles, promote collegiality, and support career advancement. Through a strong partnership with partners such as the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center and the Office of Faculty Affairs, the committee will design and implement faculty training initiatives that emphasize inclusive pedagogy, ethical workplace interactions, and effective conflict resolution strategies.

In collaboration with Deans, the California Faculty Association, and other key stakeholders, the committee will develop targeted professional development programs for new faculty, department chairs, and Unit RTP Committees. These programs will equip faculty with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in teaching, research, and service. Additionally, the committee will facilitate workshops and structured dialogue sessions that reinforce best practices in professionalism, faculty governance, and workplace culture. These initiatives are intended to contribute to prevention efforts to avoid Other Conduct of Concern (e.g., understanding and applying policies and procedures governing workplace conduct, recognizing and reducing implicit bias, healthy relationships, effective communication, effective conflict resolution, effective performance management, having difficult conversations). By tracking patterns of faculty concerns and providing structured feedback, the committee will contribute to institutional improvements that promote a thriving and collegial academic community.

303.8.3 Procedures for the Committee on Professional Responsibility

The chair of the Academic Senate shall convene a meeting of the Committee on Professional Responsibility at the beginning of each academic year to issue its charge; revise procedures. The members of the committee shall also elect a chair at this meeting.

Requests for the Committee on Professional Responsibility to act provide service shall be delivered in writing to the chair of the committee. Requests may be made by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the AVP for Faculty Affairs, Deans, and Faculty. The Committee on Professional Responsibility may also work proactively in consultation with the Academic Senate. The Committee on Professional Responsibility is expected to hold at least one Faculty Town Hall per academic year to have an open discussion about the campus climate and future priorities and initiatives. Upon receipt of a request, the chair shall confer with the designated administrator and with the designated representative of the California Faculty Association to identify any issues that require administrative intervention or union representation. After any administrative or union issues have been identified and referred, the chair shall convene a meeting of the Committee on Professional Responsibility, which shall begin an inquiry into the remaining issues, if any. The Committee shall discontinue the inquiry at any time it determines that the facts do not provide sufficient evidence to support the allegation. The Committee may also decide at any time that the case involves only

~~minor matters that properly should be handled by the basic academic unit through informal resolution and so refer it, with or without recommendations.~~

~~If the Committee determines that the facts support the allegation and that the matter cannot be properly resolved by the basic academic unit, the Committee shall conduct an impartial review.~~

~~Following an impartial review, the committee may make one or more of the following recommendations:~~

- ~~a. No further action.~~
- ~~b. Referral to the basic academic unit.~~
- ~~c. Referral for assistance with dispute resolution.~~
- ~~d. Recommendations for change in faculty behavior.~~
- ~~e. Referral to the President or designee.~~

~~If the Committee determines that its recommendations have not been followed, the committee shall refer or re-refer the matter to the President or designee.~~

~~When referring to the President, the committee shall not make recommendations regarding corrective actions. Once the committee has made a referral to the President or designee, the committee has fulfilled its responsibility, and because of rules of confidentiality, the committee will not receive reports of subsequent actions.~~

~~The Committee on Professional Responsibility shall prepare a formal written report of the disposition of each referral it receives. The report shall present the committee's conclusions and the basis for those conclusions. Copies of the report shall go to the individual (faculty member, librarian, or counselor) whose behavior was questioned, to the person(s) requesting committee consideration, and to the committee files. If the Committee refers the matter, a copy of the report shall be forwarded along with the referral.~~

~~Nothing in this section shall be construed to abridge the rights of any faculty member or of the University enumerated in the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the Faculty Handbook, professional code of conduct, or state or federal laws. Neither shall anything in this section be construed to abridge the responsibility of the Committee to follow up on cases it has reviewed.~~

303.8.4 Annual Reports

303.8.4.1 Report to Senate Chair and Provost

At least two weeks before the last meeting each year of the Academic Senate, the Committee shall meet conjointly with the Chair of the Senate and the Provost to review the committee's work.

303.8.4.2 Report to the Senate

At the last meeting each year of the Academic Senate, the Committee on Professional Responsibility shall submit an annual summary report of its activities. Information that identifies individuals or departments shall not be included in the report.

Rationale:

1. This resolution addresses some redundancies in existing processes.
2. The Faculty Affairs Committee acknowledges that the Committee on Professional Responsibility has not been convened in several years, likely since the creation of the Faculty Ombudsperson.
3. The Collective Bargaining Agreement currently has a statutory grievance process, that has functioned similarly to the Committee on Professional Responsibility. The statutory grievance process "utilizes a Faculty Hearing Committee composed of full-time faculty to make non-binding recommendations to the campus President". This process is very similar to the existing procedures of the Committee for Professional Responsibility.
 - a. See: <https://www.calfac.org/resources/cfa-grievance-and-discipline-appeal-filing-guide/>
 - b. See <https://www.calfac.org/contract-2022-2025/#article-10>
4. The CSU also has a policy on "Other Conduct of Concern", defined as "conduct that does not violate CSU policies or local, state or federal laws and, therefore, does not warrant disciplinary action but that nevertheless negatively impacts the learning, living and working environment of the CSU community".
5. In discussions, the Faculty Affairs Committee clearly recognizes the need for professional development, training, and proactive avoidance of unacceptable professional behavior.
6. The role of mediation may be fulfilled most effectively by the Faculty Ombudsperson, who is acts as an independent person. A committee of five or more faculty members may not be able to manage confidential matters effectively and in confidence.
7. This resolution reimagines the Committee on Professional Responsibility to focus on professional development and creating a more positive campus climate.
8. If passed and approved by the President, these procedures are expected to be implemented at the start of the 2025-2026 academic year.

9. When the budget allows, the Faculty Affairs Committee recommends 3 units of reassigned time for each member of the Committee for Professional Responsibility given the expectations for proactive efforts and programming.
10. The Executive Committee of the Academic Senate is requested to review the activities of this committee after five years to determine whether it should be maintained, restructured, or eliminated.

Distribution List:

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Provost and VP for Academic Affairs
AVP for Faculty Affairs
AVP for Academic Affairs and Dean of Academic Programs
College Deans
Associate Deans
Dean of Libraries
Dean of Antelope Valley
Department Chairs
General Faculty

Approved by the Academic Senate: April 10, 2025

Sent to the President: April 25, 2025

President Approved: May 28, 2025