

## ***Progress Report on Academic Freedom***

The Academic Senate at BMCC established an Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Freedom in Fall 2007 to begin discussions about how to create a commitment to academic freedom on campus.

Over the course of the next two years, the Ad Hoc Committee studied definitions of academic freedom, finding that the AAUP's was the soundest definition. The Ad Hoc Committee addressed ways in which academic freedom could best be supported and encouraged in the college for full time and adjunct faculty, and began to disseminate a discussion of academic freedom by sponsoring a college-wide forum, Spring 2008. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee participated in a session on academic freedom at the AAUP convention in Washington D.C. in the summer of 2008. In April 28, 2010 the Joe Doctor Colloquium (sponsored by the Academic Senate's Faculty Development Committee) was devoted to "Academic Freedom for the Whole Faculty." The College Council –the body which can amend the college's Governance rules-- approved the creation of a Standing Committee on Academic Freedom at its April 2010 meeting, and this committee was subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees.

During the academic year 2010-2011 the newly formed Standing Committee on Academic Freedom discussed its charge and drafted a manual about academic freedom at BMCC. The BMCC Academic Senate unanimously approved the [Academic Freedom Manual](#) is manual at its May 25, 2011 meeting.

As a result of its work during the 2010-2011 academic year, the committee determined that its main charge is to educate the BMCC community about academic freedom, in addition to following up on complaints (both formal and informal) on alleged infringements on academic freedom. Such complaints may result in specific recommendations to the Academic Senate to adopt new policies that will improve the climate of academic freedom on campus. These procedures are described in detail in the manual. Our document also stresses the fact that both the protection of academic freedom and the requirements of academic responsibility apply not only to tenure-track and tenured faculty, but also to all others, such as part-time faculty and teaching assistants, who exercise teaching responsibilities.

The 2010-2011 Committee on Academic Freedom recommended that as part of its educational and dissemination efforts, future committees should consider publishing an article in *Faculty Focus* (a publication of the *Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*), create an Academic Freedom Committee website, pursue additional strategies for education and outreach on academic freedom issues, and further contribute to the Academic Freedom manual.

The 2011-2012 Academic Freedom Committee is currently pursuing various dissemination and education strategies. Besides enhancing the manual itself, the committee is drafting a brochure with the salient points of the manual, including a selection of scenarios pertaining to academic freedom. The committee plans to visit the academic departments in order to distribute and discuss the brochure, and expects to generate lively discussions around campus about what academic freedom is, what it is not, and how some of the scenarios clearly relate to academic freedom issues, while others pose significant complexity. BMCC's manual has been shared with the CUNY University Faculty Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and is considered a model for other campuses.

Marcos Zyman, Spring 2012