



TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate
FROM: UFS Undergraduate Committee
RE: Resolution on Academic Freedom and Shared Governance in Online Education
DATE: 182nd Plenary, April 11-13, 2019
LOCATION: SUNY Potsdam
RESOLUTION #: 082-07-01
VOTE TALLY: For: 31; Against: 2; Abstain: 7

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS the use of digital and online teaching methodologies and tools has transformed SUNY’s reach, and online education is currently being proposed as an essential part of SUNY’s future identity; and

WHEREAS this transformation toward SUNY Online has resulted in concerns for faculty involvement as it pertains to development of content, academic freedom, and shared governance; and

WHEREAS there has been a national trend towards the use of online program management services (OPMs) to support the development of content, recruitment, and other essential services, and SUNY System has maintained that they “will engage OPMs as needed to provide vital consultations and services as identified” in the draft of the SUNY Online White Paper¹; and

WHEREAS the combination of an increase in online offerings, rising costs of education, and unfettered power of textbook publishing companies has led to a trend towards development and use of open access or open educational resources (OER), which has dramatically increased the use of these largely online tools across the SUNY system, and necessitated a recognition by the Chancellor that the development of said materials (whether textbooks, syllabi, full courses, or other curricular items) constitutes a scholarly and creative exercise requiring respect, protection of ownership, and empowerment to make informed decisions about whether and how to share this work²; and

WHEREAS the UUP has been actively engaged in determining the best practices for online learning, including that faculty retain the rights to choose their own materials, methods of teaching, and ownership of their works³; and

WHEREAS faculty participation in the development of curricula, course content, methods of instruction, and all other academic standards and processes is essential to ensure educational quality, reputation of SUNY, and academic freedom, as outlined in Articles X and VI of the Policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees:

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the UFS encourages senators and campus governance leaders to distribute the AAUP toolkit⁴ presented at this plenary to their campuses to help educate faculty about (a) the importance of making informed decisions about retaining ownership of their works, (b) their role in developing academic resources, policies, and procedures for online education, and (c) the importance of shared governance in the development of online education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate encourages the Chancellor to include, in future communications regarding the advancement of SUNY Online, clear statements regarding faculty participation in developing academic resources, policies, and procedures for online education, and methods to include shared faculty governance in the development of online education.

BACKGROUND:

1. SUNY Online White Paper draft: <http://www.sunyufs.us/bulletin.html>
2. SUNY Board of Trustees Open Access Policy and System Repository Resolution (March 22, 2018) https://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/Tab11_Campus%20Open%20Access%20Policies%20and%20System%20Repository.pdf
3. <http://uupinfo.org/reports/reportpdf/BestPracticesOnlineLearning.pdf>
4. AAUP Education Not Privatization Toolkit <https://onefacultyoneresistance.org/privatization/>