

# COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY (CAFR)

## ANNUAL REPORT TO OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY SENATE

2025-26

**Current Committee Chair:** Joel Wainwright (15 June 2025 – 1 May 2026)

**Incoming Committee Chair:** Joel Wainwright (1 May 2026 – 1 May 2027)

**Committee Members (SP26):** Tom Magliery; Jin Jun; Vic St. John; Michele Basso; Tristram McPherson; Mary Rodriguez; Rebecca Akintade [student].

**Number of Meetings:** CAFR met monthly (August 2025-April 2026) and held occasional, additional meetings for specific cases and issues. For summer 2026, we divided the committee into subcommittees; each subcommittee will meet approximately 2-3 times.

**Do you have Bylaws?** Yes. These were updated/amended in April 2026.

*Briefly describe the key accomplishments of your committee this year:*

2025-26 was a busy year for CAFR.

[1] Membership changes. In addition to appointing a new Chair (with Wainwright replacing Basso), CAFR saw the replacement of four departing members (Galvin, Cheavens, Pempala, and Annerino [student]) with five new members (Magliery, St. John, McPherson, Jun, and Akintade [student]). (Five members replaced four because CAFR ended the previous year with one spot unfilled.) In a change from previous practice, all new members met with the Chair for an onboarding meeting before their first meeting.

[2] Goal-setting and planning. In light on the erosion of academic freedom underway in 2025, CAFR underwent a process of reevaluating our work and priorities. This resulted in several conversations, circulation of memos, conversations with cognate committees, and the development of a new work program.

[3] Correction of CAFR's "duties and responsibilities". After consultation with the Secretary of the Senate and previous CAFR Chair Donald Mutti, and by working in collaboration with Rules, CAFR

corrected an unfortunate typo that had been inserted into the text defining CAFR's mandated duties and responsibilities (ca 2018). The corrected presentation of CAFR's duties and responsibilities reads as follows:

1. Study all conditions which may affect the academic freedom or responsibility of the faculty of the university, including, but not limited to:
  - a. The review of proposed changes in Chapter 3335-6 of the Administrative Code (rules of the university faculty concerning faculty appointment, reappointments, promotion and tenure); and
  - b. Such changes in the office of academic affairs policies and procedures volume three promotion and tenure as may impinge upon academic freedom, responsibility, or tenure.

If the committee finds that any such condition or proposed change adversely affects academic freedom, responsibility, or tenure, it shall report that find promptly to the senate for its review.

2. Hear and investigate complaints by individual faculty members concerning alleged infringements upon academic freedom or responsibility in the university; report findings and recommendations to the parties involved with the hope of mediating a dispute and report to the senate if further action by the senate is appropriate.
3. Hear and investigate complaints by individual faculty members concerning alleged improper evaluation under the procedures of rule 3335-5-05 of the Administrative Code.

Previously, point 1 conflated illustration b. and the concluding sentence of CAFR's first mandate:

1. Study all conditions which may affect the academic freedom or responsibility of the faculty of the university, including, but not limited to:
  - a. the review of proposed changes in Chapter 3335-6 of the Administrative Code Rules of the University Faculty Concerning Faculty Appointment, Reappointments, Promotion and Tenure; and
  - b. such changes in the Office of Academic Affairs Policies and Procedures Volume 3 Promotion and Tenure as may impinge upon academic freedom, responsibility, or tenure. If the committee finds that any such condition or proposed change adversely affects academic freedom, responsibility, or tenure, it shall report that finding promptly to the senate for its review.

This correction clarified that CAFR is responsible to report its findings under point 1 to Senate. With this clarification [3], and in light of the strategic prioritization [2], in 2025-26 CAFR divided its work into three categories:

“Type 1 reports”: CAFR-initiated reports to Senate on conditions or proposed changes which adversely affect academic freedom or responsibility”.

“Type 2 reports”: reports initiated by individual faculty members who allege infringements upon academic freedom or responsibility.

“Type 3 reports”: reports initiated by individual faculty members who allege improper evaluation under the procedures of rule 3335-5-05 (concerning promotion and tenure).

[4] Type 1 cases. CAFR held preliminary discussions concerning many distinct issues or conditions which may negatively affect the academic freedom or responsibility of the faculty. This led to preliminary research and the generation of four draft reports. Two of these drafts reports – both concerning consequences of SB1 – were finalized by CAFR and brought to the University Senate via Faculty Council (see attached). University Senate then elected to create an ad hoc committee to respond to CAFR’s reports. Two CAFR members (Magliery and St. John) have been ‘seconded’ to this ad hoc committee, which is presently at work.

[5] Type 2 cases. CAFR heard and investigated one Type 2 case, brought to conclusion in December 2025. Additionally, CAFR’s Chair (Wainwright) held several conversations with individual faculty members who were considering bringing a potential Type 2 claim to CAFR.

[6] Type 3 cases. CAFR heard and investigated one Type 3 case, brought to conclusion in August 2025. Additionally, CAFR’s Chair (Wainwright) held several conversations with individual faculty members who were considering bringing a potential Type 3 claim to CAFR.

[7] Meetings with OAA and OLA. CAFR’s Chair held several meetings with OAA. E.g., [7a] CAFR’s decision letter in the August 2025 Type 3 case led to a conversation about Type 3 case processes. [7b] CAFR’s Type 1 draft reports were discussed with OAA and OLA in February 2026 before coming before the Faculty Council and University Senate. [7c] CAFR’s chair held follow-up conversations apropos a dialogue initiated in 2024 with the previous Chair of CAFR (see CAFR’s 2025 report point 4: “CAFR reviewed changes to the OAA handbook under CAFR Responsibility #1b. CAFR raised concerns with new promotion & tenure processes for use when faculty misconduct investigations occur at the same time. The Chairs of CAFR, Faculty Council and Cabinet discussed these concerns with Vice Provost Helen Malone. The meeting ended with an agreement to meet again and add potential amendments to reduce the risk of faculty harm.”) This process was brought to completion in AU 2025.

[8] Faculty survey. CAFR executed a survey of faculty views about academic freedom. We anticipate reporting on these results in AU 2026.

[9] Rules changes. At the last University Senate meeting of 2025-26, a number of changes to CAFR’s Rules passed. The two most substantive changes were [9.a] improvements to the language defining our work, to better fit with our actual practices, and [9.b] expansion of CAFR membership

by adding two new members: one staff member (our first) and one more faculty member (preferably a non-TT member).

[10] Language for syllabi. CAFR collaborated with AAUP-Committee A to draft language about academic freedom which faculty are encouraged to add to their syllabi, viz:

Academic freedom: The Ohio State University supports the “freedom of faculty to ... discuss in classrooms, in their own manner, any material that is relevant to the subject matter as defined in the course syllabus” (rule 3335-5-01.B). Consistent with this norm, this course abides by the principle of academic freedom. This means that this course encourages open inquiry, critical questioning, and respectful debate. By ensuring the right to express thoughts, challenge assumptions, and pursue knowledge freely, academic freedom not only enriches individual growth but also upholds the integrity of higher education as a site of discovery.

[11] Chair election. During SP 2026, committee member McPherson organized a private email poll of all members (except Wainwright) to ascertain the committee’s support for Wainwright to remain Chair. After doing so, finding strong support for a second term, at the March 2026 CAFR meeting, McPherson brought a motion to CAFR in favor of reappointing Wainwright as Chair. It passed unanimously (7-0).

*Please reflect on the goals set for this committee identified in the prior Annual Review and describe how they were addressed:*

N/a. In light of the turnover of leadership and composition, the 2025-26 CAFR defined new goals and organized a novel work program in August-September 2025.

*Please indicate key goals this committee wants to accomplish in 2026-2027.*

[1] Onboarding new members. CAFR anticipates four new members to come onboard by August 2026. Two will replace members who are rotating off (Rodriguez and Basso); two will take up spaces newly created at the end of 2025-26: one slot for a staff member (a new position) and one additional faculty member (preferably an NTT faculty).

[2] Type 1: as of this writing (8 June 2026), CAFR has two more Type 1 reports in progress. We hope to bring them to University Senate via Faculty Council in September 2026. Additionally, CAFR plans to produce an omnibus report on “The state of academic freedom at Ohio State University” by AU26.

[3] CAFR will continue to respond to Type 2 and Type 3 cases as they are brought forward by individual faculty.

[4] Academic freedom workshop/conference. CAFR is in early stages of discussing/planning a one-day conference or workshop on academic freedom at Ohio State, tentatively planned for March 2027.

*Did you consult with any other Senate Committees? Are there other committees with which you feel this committee should connect in 2024-2025?*

Certainly. CAFR worked closely with members of Steering Committee (particularly Sara Watson, whom we thank), the new ‘culture and community’ committee (formerly known as Diversity), and Rules (to amend CAFR’s bylaws). CAFR also thanks the Secretary of the Senate (Jared Gardner) for frequent consultations and Ivy Hammond for steadfast support. Finally, CAFR thanks AAUP Committee A, particularly its Chair, Ben McKean, for its encouragement.

I submit this annual report as the CAFR Chair and consider it to factually and accurately represent the complicated and difficult work of the committee (see below).



**Joel Wainwright**

Professor, Department of Geography

Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom & Responsibility