**Faculty Support and Guidance**

**(note: adapted from University of Iowa guide)**

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. Each faculty member is entitled to full freedom in the classroom discussing the subject which the faculty member teaches. Texas A&M will not penalize or discipline members of the faculty because of their exercise of academic freedom. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. It is the responsibility of faculty members to ensure that topics discussed are related to the classroom subject. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. It is not the proper role of the university or any outside agency to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Engaging with new ideas and perspectives helps students grow intellectually and is beneficial to the educational process as well as the public good.

Faculty members can be targeted by individuals or groups outside of the university based on the content of their scholarship, teaching, clinical care, and/or service, or because of their role within the university. This guidance provides information and resources to the campus community and to faculty members in situations where faculty are threatened or harassed from sources outside the university (internal procedures can be found in SAP 08.01.01.M1.01). The guidance is content neutral and is intended to support faculty members regardless of the content of their ideas or views. Targeting of faculty members for the nature of their work or their role in the university is detrimental to the educational, research, and service missions of Texas A&M University. It creates an environment of threat and intimidation that limits free expression of ideas and engagement in the educational enterprise. Knowledge of resources and guidance before such situations occur prepares the campus to respond effectively when a situation arises.

**Individual Faculty Member**

* Take steps to protect your safety. Identify your primary concerns and seek assistance. The below includes options to plan for your safety – consider which options are best for your situation.
* Notify your department head, college/school administration, and/or supervisor of the harassment. See other sections for options that are available to support you. You do not need to manage this experience on your own, and there are resources and offices that can assist.
* Submit a report to the special situations team (TellSomebody) or work with your department head or supervisor to contact the special situations team (Faculty Affairs has a representative on the team). This team is charged to assess circumstances, enhance communication, and initiate appropriate responses to specific problems that may involve threat to the safety and security of the University community.
* Consult with the University Police Department regarding on campus safety, and community police departments regarding off campus safety. Consider engaging the corps of cadets guard room escort program. If you are concerned about safety in your home, create a safety plan for home and work, with assistance from the police department.
* If the harassment is gender-based or sexual in nature, report the issues to and consult with the Department of Civil Rights and Equity Investigations (CREI).
* Do not delete messages. Consider disengaging from reading emails in your inbox and/or listening to voice mails, or other ways that threats are reaching you. Seek assistance to review and sort incoming messages, who can forward harassing messages to the responding team and send work related messages to you).
* Create a log to document and archive threatening emails, social media, and phone messages. Consider asking a friend to monitor these on your behalf to keep you aware of any developments.
* Be cautious about responding to threatening emails, social media, etc. Although it might seem right to respond, it can provide harassers with additional material and prolong the exchange. If you choose not to respond, you might consider asking friends and colleagues to also not respond. Remember that all communications are subject to open records requests.
* Protect your cyber-identify (phone, network access, social media, etc).
* Consult with your college/school or university marketing and communications for assistance with responding to the situation. For example, you might prepare a concise message on your position and distribute to colleagues. You might also want assistance in deciding whether and how to respond to media requests.
* Reach out to friends and colleagues and develop a support system. Consider requesting connection with other scholars with similar experiences through Faculty Affairs.
* Consult with your department head if these issues have affected your productivity.

**Department Head**

* Reach out to the faculty member as soon as you are able after becoming aware of the situation. Connect with your college/school on ways to support the faculty member and available resources.
* Meet with the faculty member to identify their on- or off-campus safety concerns. Discuss with the faculty member the nature of the harassment, when it began, and changes; identify the environments where the harassment is occurring. With the faculty member’s consent, reach out to campus resources to address the issues identified by the faculty member.
* Social media, email, and phone harassment can be received by multiple offices. Inform administrative staff of potential issues as they need to know to respond, and provide them with protocols for responding to contact (e.g., a template response, instructions to preserve documentation).
* Communicate with the dean’s office regularly to coordinate responses. All communication can be subject to an open records request.
* Consider the well-being of faculty, staff, and students who could be contacted or involved, in consultation with the faculty member determine how to offer support and/or bring people together to discuss the situation and support resources.
* Facilitate the movement of classes or workspace, if requested by the faculty member.
* Facilitate the removal of the faculty member’s direct contact information from webpages and/or directory, if the faculty member requests it.
* After addressing safety and security concerns, consider the potential impact on the faculty member’s academic career and appropriate support or timeline extensions that could offset the impact. It could be useful to connect the faculty member to other scholars who have similar experiences.
* Discuss issues of academic freedom in meetings regularly, including attention to the ways that external forces can attempt to silence scholars through social media or other attacks and the resources available if that occurs.
* If you become the target of harassment, consult with the dean’s office to ensure your own safety.

**College/School Administration**

* Develop a leadership message that supports academic freedom, the importance of faculty protections, and the benefits of education that involves the discussion of difficult and controversial issues. Work with marketing and communications to emphasize university values, and addresses concerns of multiple constituents.
* Engage college HR to provide support for staff who could be positioned to answer phone calls, emails, or social media, or who might be concerned about their safety.
* If the situation becomes a crisis, consult with the targeted faculty member to discuss how to publicly handle the crisis and discuss their concerns. Involve the department head to ensure coordination.
* Social media, email, and phone harassment can be received by multiple offices. Inform administrative staff of potential issues as they need to know to respond, and provide them with protocols for responding to contact (e.g., a template response, instructions to preserve documentation).

**Communications**

* If you become aware that a faculty member’s name has shown up in a threatening or harassing way in social media, inform the dean. Keep the dean informed of any additional mentions.
* Provide support to the faculty member being targeted, as requested by the faculty member. This could include identifying if and how to respond, guidance for working with media, and information to help manage professional and personal reputation.
* Work with campus offices to coordinate information sharing on a need to know basis, and to coordinate a consistent message.
* Offer support to faculty, staff, and administrators regarding media training and guidance. Coordinate with college/school leadership on a message supporting academic freedom in the context of university values.

**University Administration**

* Open communication with the dean and request updates on the situation as needed.
* Reach out to the targeted faculty member, stating the university commitment to academic freedom and encouraging the faculty member to work with their leadership for support.
* If appropriate, work with communications to issue a statement regarding the university commitment to academic freedom, free speech, and the safety of faculty.
* Connect with the office of general counsel as appropriate on legal matters, and to develop practices that reduce legal risk.