THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Subject: Faculty Governance Update: Annual Lecture on Academic and Intellectual Freedom

Over the years professors from the University of Michigan have played key roles in protecting and preserving academic and intellectual freedom. For example, UM professors William Herbert Hobbs (geology) and Karl Eugen Guthe (physics and first Dean of Rackham) played prominent national roles in the establishment of the AAUP in 1915. But nearly 50 years later UM President Harlan Hatcher suspended Clement Markert (assistant professor, biology), and fired Mark Nickerson, (tenured associate professor, pharmacology) and instructor Chandler Davis (mathematics) for refusing to testify before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Un-American Activities based on their rights under the United States Constitution. Because President Hatcher had fired Professor Nickerson in the face of overwhelming advice from members of the University faculty not to take such an action, the American Association of University Professors in 1957 placed the University on its list of censured colleges and universities signaling to the academic world that faculty and students could not expect to enjoy the benefits of academic and intellectual freedom at the University of Michigan. Within a year the Regents of the University of Michigan changed the Regental Bylaws, believing that the new bylaw would prevent a University President from terminating, without proper and sufficient cause, a faculty member's tenure and the American Association of University Professors removed Michigan from its list of censured institutions.

In the late 1980s former UM history professor David Hollinger wrote a history of the McCarthy era at the University of Michigan. His student, Adam Kulakow, created a video "Keeping in Mind: the McCarthy Era at the University of Michigan." In 1990 the University of Michigan's Senate Assembly created an annual lecture to be named the University of Michigan Senate's Davis, Markert, Nickerson Lecture on Academic and Intellectual Freedom. The Senate Assembly also created the Academic Freedom Lecture Fund to raise funds to support the annual lecture and related events.

The first lecture was delivered by Professor Robert O'Neil on February 18, 1991. Each of the sixteen lecturers has been an outstanding scholar who - through research, public service, the arts, or contributions to public discourse - has shown an enduring and extraordinary commitment to the values of intellectual freedom especially as they relate to academic freedom. Of the first sixteen lecturers, there have been six constitutional lawyers, three historians, four members of the Press, one sociologist, one linguist, and one English scholar. Of that group, three have served as Presidents of major universities, including Brown and Columbia Universities and of the Universities of Michigan, Virginia and Wisconsin; one has been a dean of a graduate school; two have headed major foundations; one was the President of the American Association of University Professors; and fourteen have been or are university professors. Each has demonstrated active personal engagement in the defense of the values of intellectual and/or academic freedom in some aspect of their careers. This year's speaker is clearly a worthy addition to this distinguished group. Nadine Strossen, Professor of Law at the New York Law School and President of the American Civil Liberties Union, will deliver the Seventeenth Annual University of Michigan Senate's Davis, Markert, Nickerson Lecture on Academic and Intellectual Freedom. The lecture is scheduled for Friday, November 9, 2007, at 4 pm in the Honigman Auditorium of the Law School. It is free and open to the public, and we encourage Regents, students, faculty, administrators and all other members of the community to attend.

(Submitted, July, 2007)

Regents' Bylaw 4.04. The Senate Assembly shall serve as the legislative arm of the senate…The assembly shall have power to consider and advise regarding all matters within the jurisdiction of the University Senate which affect the functioning of the University as an institution of higher learning, which concern its obligations to the state and to the community at large, and which relate to its internal organization insofar as such matters of internal organization involve general questions of educational policy.