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## 2023-06-08 Letter to the Editor: Frank Shih

Frank Shih

*Seattle University*

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# Letter to the Editor: Frank Shih

Dear Editor of the Spectator,

I am writing in response to the recent articles in the Spectator covering the proposed Faculty Handbook revision for AY2023, deliberated at the Academic Assembly (AcA) from April 26 to May 18, 2023. These articles, published on May 10 and May 17, 2023, lacked some crucial facts and context necessary to provide a more complete and accurate coverage of the issues discussed.

The AcA is Seattle University's faculty governing body, representing faculty members and serving as their official voice in university governance. One of its main responsibilities is advising the Provost on proposed revisions to the Faculty Handbook.

The Faculty Handbook Revision Committee (FHRC) is a standing committee of the AcA and is charged with overseeing and managing revisions to the Faculty Handbook pursuant to the process set forth in the Faculty Handbook. On April 26, 2023, the FHRC submitted the proposed revisions to the full AcA for consideration. AcA then shared the proposed revisions with the campus community, inviting input from full-time faculty members by May 8, 2023, adhering to the guidelines outlined in the Faculty Handbook as revised in 2022.

The AcA's role in the revision process involves studying the proposed revisions and faculty responses and recommending adopting or rejecting proposed amendments to the Provost.

In the proposed revisions considered during this cycle, there was a passage that highlighted the acknowledgment of or respect for the university's Jesuit and Catholic religious and cultural traditions. This passage had been included in some form in previous versions of the Faculty Handbook. After considering feedback from AcA members and faculty-at-large, it was decided to table the Jesuit and Catholic identity amendment for further consideration in AY2024, coinciding with the university's Mission Priority Examen process. This decision was announced on May 4, 2023, and shared with AcA and faculty-at-large.

The proposed Faculty Handbook revisions were discussed during a regular AcA meeting on May 1, 2023, and a special AcA meeting on May 11, 2023. Robust conversations took place between the Provost's Office and AcA members. A revised draft, incorporating AcA input, was circulated among members on May 12, 2023. After the regular AcA meeting on May 15, 2023, AcA members voted on the 13 separate motions through an online secret ballot. Six motions passed unanimously, six motions received 95% support, and one motion had 86% support. The results were shared with AcA on May 19, 2023, completing the AcA portion of the Faculty Handbook revision process.

The matter then progressed to the Provost, the President, and then the Board of Trustees (BoT).

The process followed a similar pattern to the classic educational video "How a Bill Becomes a Law" from Schoolhouse Rock, with each body fulfilling its respective role thoughtfully and diligently (FHRC, AcA, Provost, President, and BoT). Contrary to the characterization in your May 10 and 17 articles, representatives from the AcA engaged in a robust, interactive process with the Provost's office, as is contemplated in the Faculty Handbook, and the AcA ultimately expressed its collective voice through voting. It may be advisable to avoid exclusively relying on comments from faculty members of a single college and a feedback summary that lacked contextual information and characterizing them as reflective of the broader perspectives held by the entire faculty of the university.

As the outgoing president of AcA, I sincerely appreciate the collaborative work with Spectator reporters, having always honored your interview requests on stories throughout the years, especially during the challenging Covid Pandemic era and the implementation of many mitigation measures.

Lastly, I extend my warmest wishes to the graduating Spectator reporters I have had the privilege of working with in the past (Andru, Kali, and Emma), and I congratulate them on their graduation.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Shih, Ph.D.

President, Academic Assembly 2017-23