PRRs and Citizenship & Collegiality Resolution FAQ

This document answers some questions about the proposed Faculty Senate resolution 19-9 to remove any statements concerning citizenship, collegiality, civility, etc. from faculty Position Responsibility Statements (PRRs).

Questions concerning the FORMAT as a resolution:

Q. Why a resolution? Are resolutions binding?
In governing bodies like the Faculty Senate, resolutions express the will of the body. Often, resolutions are used to commend or condemn (e.g., the September 2019 resolution to support the library’s commitment to open access in negotiations with academic publishers, the January 2019 Faculty Senate resolution against bullying and intimidation), but resolutions can also be used by the Faculty Senate to direct particular groups to act in a particular way in accordance with principles of faculty governance that the Faculty Senate adopts.

Q. But why not change the Faculty Handbook?
The Faculty Handbook is already clear that only areas of position responsibility and aspects subject to evaluation are to be included in PRRs. The resolution reminds college and department administrators of the content of the Faculty Handbook and directs them to bring individual faculty PRSs into accord.

Q. What happens if this resolution passes? How is it enacted?
The Faculty Senate (through the president) sends the resolution to college and department administrators. The administrators are directed to bring individual faculty PRSs into accord with the Faculty Handbook. Specifically, all statements about citizenship, collegiality, civility, etc. are to be removed from faculty PRSs. They are also directed to bring any other documents concerning appointment or evaluation of faculty performance into accord with the Faculty Handbook.

Q. Can’t colleges or departments adopt more stringent requirements than those specified in the Faculty Handbook? Doesn’t the Faculty Handbook permit colleges and departments to adopt their own rules? Can’t colleges or departments require citizenship on PRSs?
There is a governance principle that colleges and departments can be more specific than the university Faculty Handbook, but that principle applies only if the more specific rule is permitted (i.e., not prohibited). In this case, adopting this resolution commits the Faculty Senate to saying that the Faculty Handbook clearly prohibits including anything in the PRS that is not expressly considered in evaluation of performance of areas of position responsibility.
Questions about the CONTENT of the resolution proposing to remove citizenship and collegiality from all faculty PRSs:

Q. Why should statements about citizenship and collegiality be removed from all faculty PRSs?

- Violates the Faculty Handbook
  The Faculty Handbook clearly states that the content of PRSs “should be general and include only the significant responsibilities of the faculty member that are important in evaluating faculty accomplishments” (FH 3.4.1, emphasis added). Including citizenship and collegiality on PRSs gives the appearance that it is subject to evaluation (in annual reviews, renewal reviews, reviews for advancement, reviews for promotion and tenure, post-tenure review).

Q. Why shouldn’t faculty PRSs require evaluation of citizenship and collegiality?

- Especially vulnerable to bias
  Unlike evaluations of performance in areas of position responsibility, evaluations of citizenship and collegiality are especially vulnerable to distortion due to personality, political, or other differences between the evaluator and the faculty member.

- Violates shared governance principles
  There are no faculty-approved standards for citizenship, collegiality, etc. in the Faculty Handbook. In contrast, there are faculty-approved standards for performance in research/creative activity, teaching, and other areas of position responsibility.

- AAUP advises against evaluating collegiality
  The American Association of University Professors (AAUP statement on collegiality, revised 2016) and ISU’s chapter of the AAUP (March 2012) strongly recommend against making collegiality an area of evaluation.

Q. What is the harm in simply stating on PRSs that citizenship or collegiality is an expectation of all faculty — without making it an area to be evaluated? Isn’t that what the Faculty Handbook says?

- Presumption of evaluation
  Items included in the PRS are presumed to be areas for evaluation. (The “PRS is a tool referenced during all forms of faculty review,” FH 3.4.1.2.) Chairs and review committees may misunderstand mere “expectations” as areas that are to be expressly evaluated.

- Chilling effects on climate
  “Citizenship,” “collegiality,” “civility,” etc. are not well-defined terms and are not defined in the Faculty Handbook. Inclusion of an expectation of citizenship, collegiality, etc. may foster distrust between the faculty member and the department chair.
As the AAUP observes, calls for collegiality may silence faculty members and suppress dissent, and may be used to enforce homogeneity. Calls for collegiality thereby pose a threat to academic freedom. Calls for collegiality may stunt department and institutional growth that emerges from disagreement and debate.

Associate Provost Bratsch-Prince recently related a story about a change to ISU’s Emerging Leaders Academy’s curriculum. The curriculum used to include a unit for leaders to promote and ensure civility. Faculty participants (especially faculty from underrepresented groups) pointed out that calls for civility from leadership can have chilling or oppressive effects. In response to these concerns, the curriculum was revised.

- **Effects of power imbalances**
  The PRS is an official document that is supposed to be agreed to by the individual faculty member and the chair. However, newly appointed faculty signing their first PRSs, faculty who are not yet tenured, and term faculty on renewable contracts are not well-positioned to negotiate elements of the PRS.

**Q. But bullying, harassment, and other forms of incivility are serious problems. Shouldn’t something be done?**

Nothing in this proposal denies the problems created by bullying, harassment, and incivility. Nothing in this proposal excuses faculty misconduct. The PRS is not the tool to address these problems. There are policies in chapter 7 of the *Faculty Handbook* that address faculty misconduct and describe procedures for investigating allegations and punishing documented cases of misconduct.