

Report of the Academic Quality Committee of the WKU Faculty Senate
February 22, 2013

I. Policy 1.3070: Evaluation and Orientation of Student Teaching Assistants

The committee endorses this policy. It will help to safeguard the academic quality of sections and labs taught by student teaching assistants and will provide student teaching assistants more feedback and guidance as they make their first forays into classroom instruction. However, since this policy most directly effects graduate students and those under the supervision of faculty who administrate graduate programs at WKU, we recommend that the Graduate Council also review and endorse the policy before it goes to the Senate.

II. Policy 1.3150 Student Production Policy

This policy, according to the description provided under *Section I: Purpose and Scope*, seeks to “ensure the safety of the campus community.” One part of the policy (II.a.ii.) addresses specific situations where advance notification and precautionary measures are almost certainly warranted: a production or performance that includes “the use of imitated, disabled or ‘prop’ firearms...or pyrotechnical special effects.” Other situations to which this policy applies, however, are not well defined, and render the applicability of the policy open to widely varying degrees of interpretation. This transforms the policy from one that requires precautionary protocols for a specific kind of activity into a catch-all notification requirement for any production, event, or performance that may in retrospect be objectionable and incendiary. With the exception of the selected examples in Section II.a.ii, quoted above, the document does not enumerate specific instances of what, under *Section I*, “may disrupt the learning environment of the university and/or be misconstrued by people in the vicinity of the project as an activity that threatens life safety or incites violence or mayhem.” Moreover, words such as “may” and “and/or,” as they are used in that sentence give the impression that—in theory—just about anything *may* be subject to the policy. The policy is therefore likely to have a chilling effect on free speech and free expression at WKU. The Academic Quality Committee recommends that the policy be rewritten in a way that more clearly spells out which activities fall under its scope and that it jettison subjective and imprecise language that will inhibit student expression on campus. That way, it may enhance student safety without inhibiting free speech.