

CIC Workshop for Deans and AVPs
Guide to Making Tough Choices
Case Study: Academic Freedom

A well-respected full professor at Typical CIC University (TCU) conducts research with clear public policy implications. Professor X publishes several op-ed pieces in the local newspaper criticizing some of the city's policies. The university has made a commitment to support development in the city and to be a partner to the city. The Mayor's Office is not happy with these op-ed pieces and reaches out to the university. The President is not happy because the university has stated a commitment to partner with the city in supporting economic development, an effort that is also supported by the Board of Trustees. The President is also concerned about the potential impact on state funding. The President shares their concerns with the Provost who comes to you, as Dean. The clear preference would be for Professor X to stop publicly criticizing the city.

Professor X understands that these op-ed pieces are putting the university in a challenging situation, so they have agreed to continue to write op-eds, but leave their affiliation with the university off the submissions, instead including their affiliation with a research institute at another university.

Students in Professor X's class are passionate about what they are learning and create a petition to get the city to change policy to be in line with the policy supported by Professor X's research. They take the petition both on and off campus and gather many signatures. Members of the university's Board of Trustees begin to hear about the petition and start calling the President. Some board members also call the Dean. Concerns from the President and the Provost increase.

- 1) What factors/stakeholders do you need to consider as you navigate this issue?
- 2) If you are an AVP, what guidance would you provide if the Dean comes to consult with you on this?
- 3) Are there ways to support the faculty member's academic freedom while also addressing the administration's concerns?
- 4) How do you support the students in this situation?
- 5) Who from the campus community might be able to support you as you navigate this situation?