

To: Faculty Assembly
From: Personnel Policy Committee
Date: September 3, 2024
Re: Deletion of the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities and Addition of Preamble

This memo explains proposed changes to Part I of the Faculty Handbook. As explained below, the faculty handbook committee proposed that the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities be removed from Part I and moved to the policy library on the Provost's website. Part I would instead include a new Preamble that explains the purpose of the Handbook.

Part I of the Handbook presently includes two documents:(1) the "Statement of Rights and Responsibilities" (hereinafter "the SoRR"), and (2) a follow-up document clarifying how the SoRR is to be interpreted. Having the SoRR be Part I of the Handbook is strange for a few reasons:

1. The SoRR is a standalone document about academic freedom that was adopted in 1973 and appears to pre-date the creation of the Faculty Handbook.
2. The SoRR applies not just to faculty but also to students. As such, it is currently displayed in various places around the university, including the [Compliance Office's Policy Library](#), as well as on the [Community Values webpage](#).
3. The process to amend the SoRR is different than the procedure to amend the Faculty Handbook. The SoRR can only be amended by a majority vote of the students, faculty, administration, and the Board of Visitors. Students have no role in amending the Faculty Handbook and the role of the "administration" is more carefully defined in the Handbook's amendment process.
4. While the SoRR states core principles of academic freedom and free speech values, it does not inform faculty about the more traditional rights and responsibilities of working at William & Mary. In short, it speaks of important values, rather than concrete guidance.

In light of these points, as well as the Board of Visitors' charge that the Handbook be shorter and easier to use, the Handbook Working Group (as well as President Rowe) recommend removing the ten-page SoRR from the Handbook. We recommend that a copy of the SoRR be maintained on the websites listed above as well as in the [policy library on the Provost's Office's website](#).

In place of the SoRR, the Handbook Working Group drafted a short Preamble that explains the purpose of the Handbook. The proposed Preamble, which would become Part I of the Handbook, is below.

I. Preamble

The Faculty Handbook describes the fundamental rights, privileges, and responsibilities of faculty members in William & Mary's academic community. It is rooted in the core concept of shared governance between administrators and faculty, and it has been approved by the Board of Visitors.

The provisions of the Faculty Handbook set forth the faculty-specific policies and procedures and other key university-level policies and procedures that govern the university and individual faculty members. Faculty and academic administrators should therefore regularly consult the Faculty Handbook and be familiar with its contents. As employees of the university, faculty and academic administrators are subject to university employment policies, some of which are linked in the text below for ease of consultation.

While the Faculty Handbook does not detail every single university policy governing faculty, it is intended to guide faculty as they implement the teaching, research, and service mission of the university. The Handbook affirms the foundational concept of academic freedom, including the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities.

As an institution of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia, William & Mary is governed by its Board of Visitors as established in the Code of Virginia. Nothing in this Handbook shall be interpreted as creating any right or benefit that is contrary to any law, rule, or regulation of the Commonwealth of Virginia or the United States.