

# Committee on the Defense of the Professional Rights of Philosophers

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## *2014-2015 Membership*

Judith Lichtenberg, chair (2017)

Joan McGregor (2016)

Natalie Nenadic (2017)

Timothy Shiell (2016)

Jacqueline Taylor (2017)

Steven Wagner (2015)

Margaret Walker (2015)

Ruth Chang, *ex officio* (2015)

Paula Gottlieb, *ex officio* (2015)

Amy Kind, *ex officio* (2017)

Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, *ex officio* (2016)

## **2014-15 Report of the Committee for the Defense of the Professional Rights of Philosophers**

**Submitted by Judith Lichtenberg, Chair, 2014-17  
September 30, 2015**

The most significant matter the committee addressed this year was a request from the chair and a professor in the University of Houston Department of Philosophy to have the censure that the APA imposed (at the recommendation of the CDPRP) in 2009-10 lifted. The case began about nine years ago. The person who brought the complaint—concerning procedural violations of his tenure case—is no longer at UH; and none of the administrators at the university level, in the department, or on the CDPRP are the same. The Committee has decided to recommend to the APA that the censure be lifted. Not only are the facts difficult to ascertain, but it appears that the APA made no specific allegations against UH; its main cause for recommending censure was that the university did not respond to its complaint. (The university was facing a lawsuit at that time—which was ultimately dropped—and that may have played a part in its nonresponsiveness.) The Committee has reason to believe that more transparent policies are in place at the university; continuing the censure seems inappropriate.

The Committee has received several other complaints and inquiries this year, but none has yet to materialize into a case. One was from a long-term adjunct who argues that as a result of his involvement in activity to improve the working conditions of adjuncts, his college retaliated against him in a number of ways. We asked him to give us a cogent timeline and summary, and are still awaiting his response. Another retired faculty member lodged a complaint about a former student who, he believed, was about to publish his findings as her own; he wanted us to reprimand her. I concluded that there was insufficient evidence to go forward; it may also be that the problem lies outside this committee's scope. We also had a request from a person who had just been denied tenure at a university outside the U.S., but again there seemed to be insufficient evidence to mount a case.

We continued to look into a case mentioned in Larry May's last report, about the small New Jersey college that fired several tenured professors on grounds of financial exigency, and where we determined that the complainant had made a prima facie case against the college. But the AAUP decided to look into this case, and it's the Committee's policy (established by I'm not sure whom) not to pursue a case if any other organization is taking it or if it's the subject of a lawsuit.