

Motion to Establish a Formal Procedure for Resolving Faculty Allegations of Academic Freedom Violations

November 8th, 2023

George Heineman
(Chair COG, CTAF Working Group)

Mark Claypool
(Chair CTAF Working Group, COG)

Introduction

- Reorganization of Faculty Handbook completed, yet work remains
- Academic Freedom, without retaliation, is guaranteed for all faculty

“CTAF has the responsibility of reviewing problems involving the academic freedom of both tenured and non-tenured faculty, whether part-time or full-time. In these cases, the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom shall endeavor to verify the facts of the academic freedom case.”

- Academic freedom defined (Chapter 1, Section II, Part V)
- But Faculty Handbook has few details regarding procedures

Academic Freedom Working Group

- Working group approved by CTAF:
 - Provost
 - 3 former chairs of CTAF (one a former department head)
 - Current chairs of COG, CTAF



Lauren Matthews



Jim Doyle



Kris Wobbe



George Heineman



Mark Claypool



Wole Soboyejo

What We Did Last Summer

- Listening sessions
 - Academic deans
 - Department heads
 - General counsel
 - Faculty governance
 - Faculty groups – probationary, tenured, secure contract, and open

Timeline

- Summer 2023 – listening sessions

What We Are Doing A-Term

- Listening sessions
 - Academic deans
 - Department heads
 - General counsel
 - Faculty governance
 - Faculty groups – probationary, tenured, secure contract, and open
- Creating draft
 - Flow chart
 - Faculty Handbook content

Timeline

- Summer 2023 – listening sessions
- **A-term** – update faculty (and trustees) with progress

What We Doing in B-Term

- Listening sessions
 - Academic deans
 - Department heads
 - General counsel
 - Faculty governance
 - Faculty groups – probationary, tenured, secure contract, and open
- Creating draft
 - Flow chart
 - Faculty Handbook content
- Finalize details with COG and CTAF
- Motion to faculty

Timeline

- Summer 2023 – listening sessions
- A-term – update faculty (and trustees) with progress
- **B-term, week 1** – draft of motion for faculty review
- **November 8th** – motion to discuss at Faculty meeting
- **December 6th** – motion and vote at Faculty meeting

Guiding Principles for CTAF Cases Alleging Violation of Academic Freedom

Defined in May 2023: Affirmed by CTAF, Administration, OGC and Trustees

- AFD** Violations are based on definition of AF in Faculty Handbook
- INF** Before formal proceeding, possible informal resolutions
- ALL** Before deciding violation, seek input from all relevant parties
- NRT** Guaranteed nonretaliation in all respects
- REM** Remedies appropriate for individual case
- CNF** Confidentiality must be protected

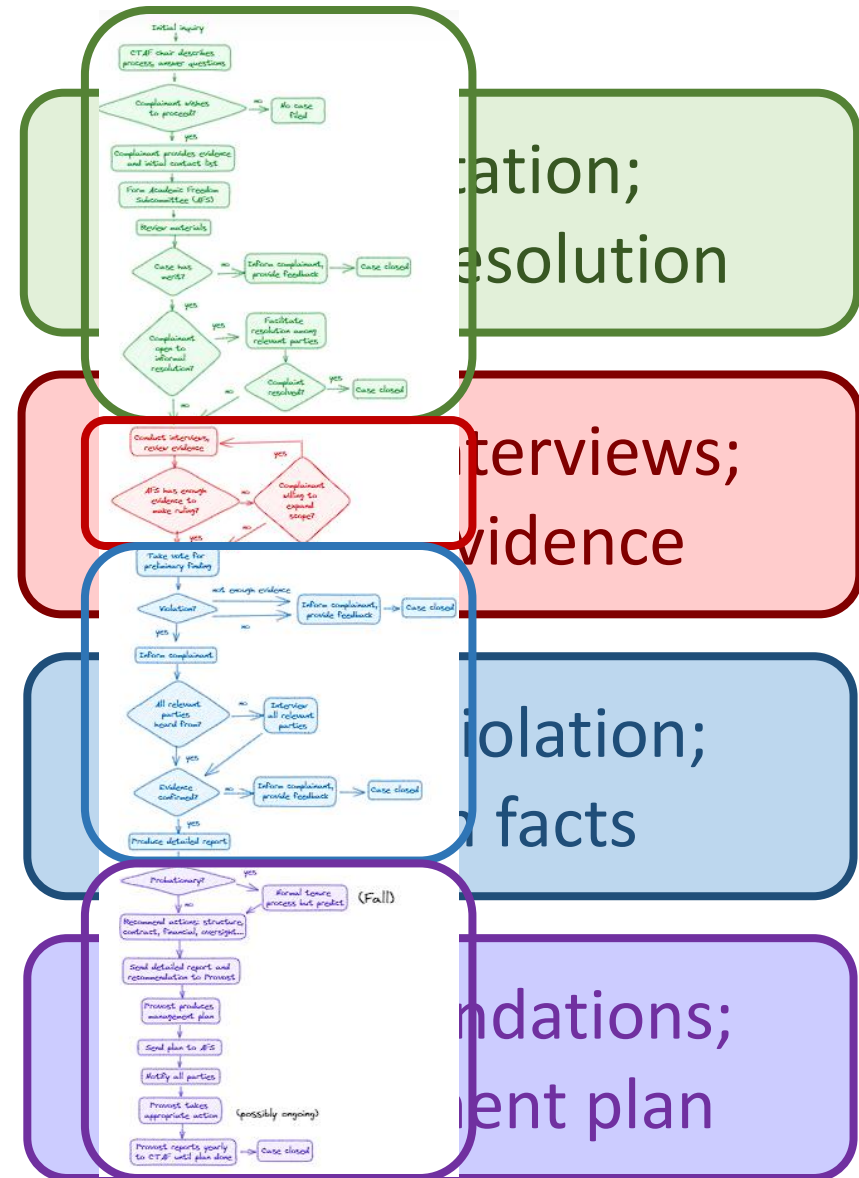
Procedure for Complaints of Academic Freedom Violation

Aim to strike a balance:

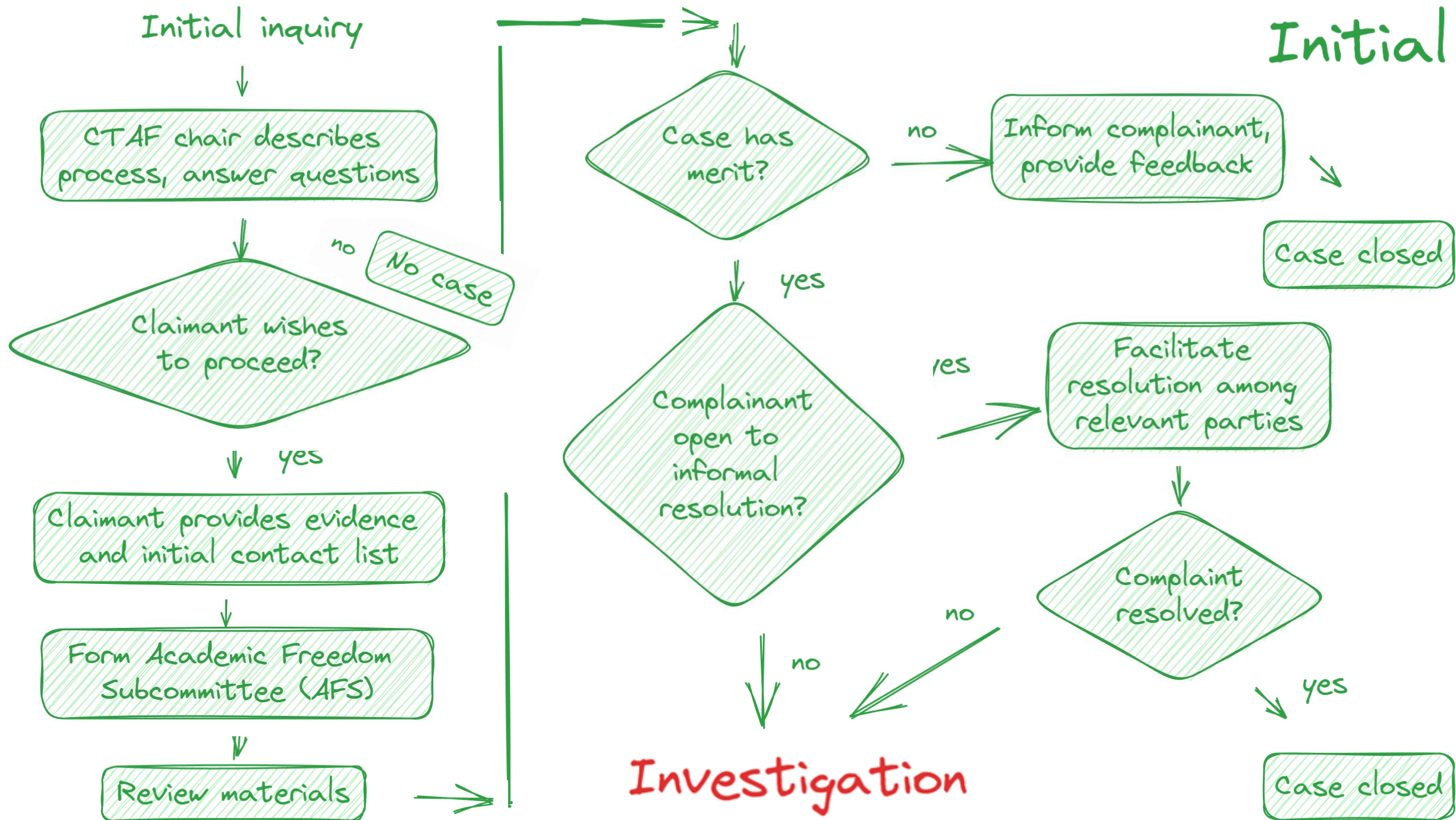
- Avoid procedure that deters complainants from coming forward
- Ensure all evidence is confirmed
- Applicable to all faculty members

While adhering to principles

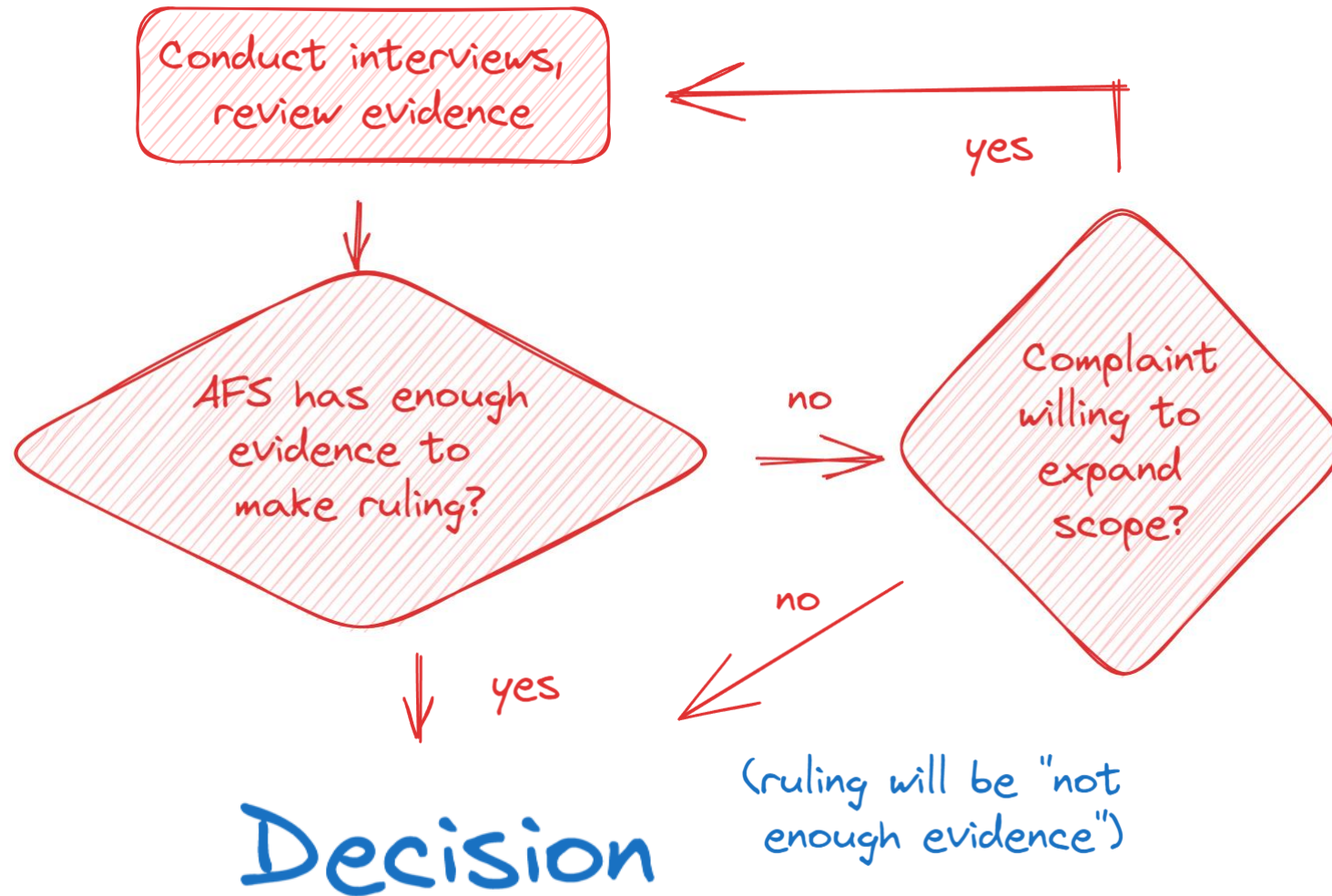
Initial
Investigation
Decision
Resolution



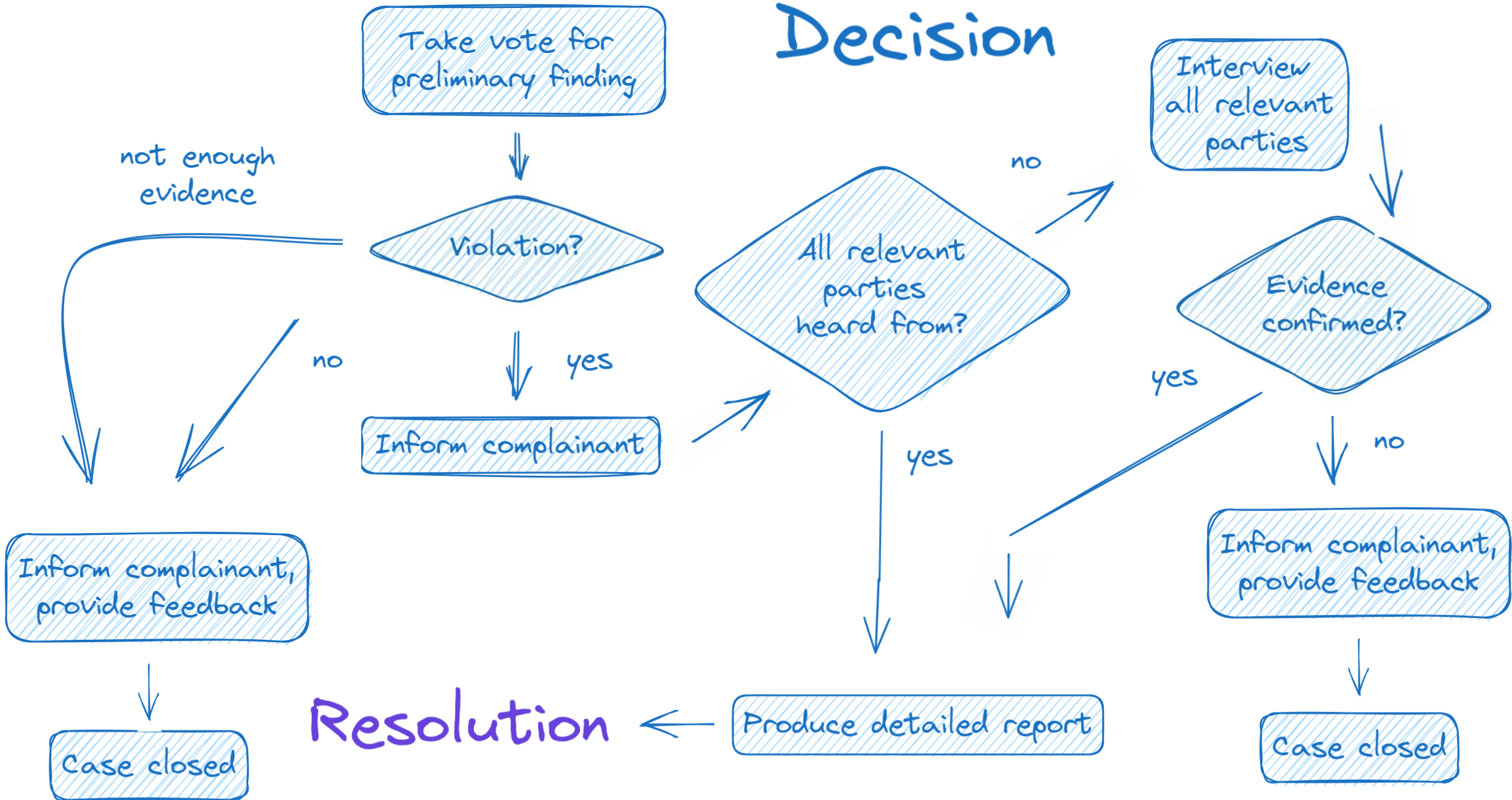
CONFIDENTIAL PROCESS



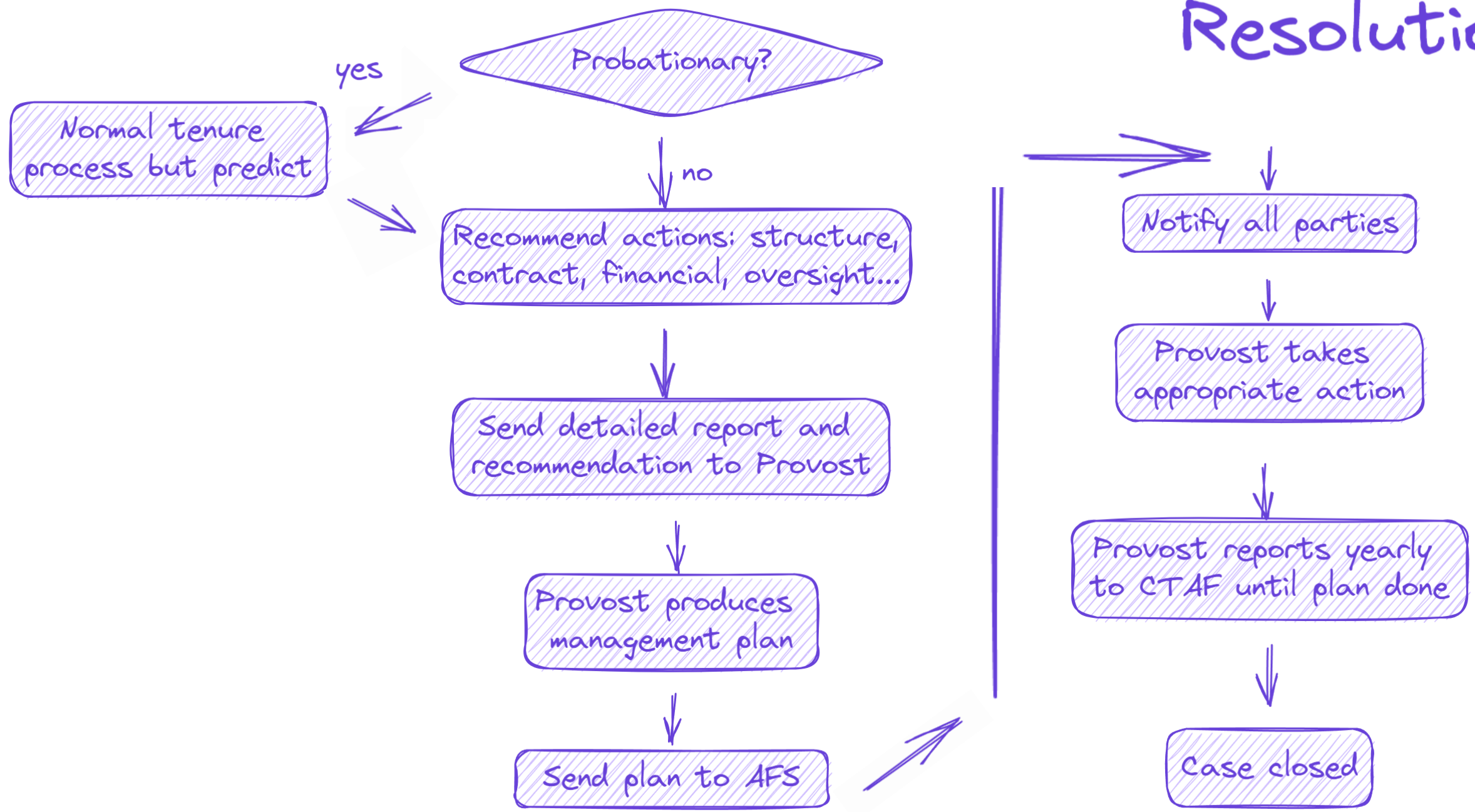
Investigation



Decision



Resolution



Procedure and Principles

		<u>AFD</u>	<u>INF</u>	<u>ALL</u>	<u>NRT</u>	<u>REM</u>	<u>CNF</u>
<i>Initial</i>	Consultation; informal resolution	✓	✓				✓
<i>Investigation</i>	Conduct interviews; review evidence	✓		✓			✓
<i>Decision</i>	Vote on violation; confirm facts	✓		✓			✓
<i>Resolution</i>	Recommendations, management plan				✓	✓	✓

Motion to Establish a Formal Procedure for Resolving Faculty Allegations of Academic Freedom Violations

Comments and questions?

The ability to navigate, and to learn from, difficult situations is critical to the continued health of our community.

Timeline

- ✓ Summer 2023 – listening sessions
- ✓ A-term – update faculty (and trustees) with progress
- ✓ B-term, week 1 – draft of motion for faculty review
- now** November 8th – motion to discuss at Faculty meeting
- December 6th – motion and vote at Faculty meeting

Additional Background Materials

Academic Freedom

- A. **Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in research** and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be in accordance with established WPI policy.

- B. **Faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom** in discussing their subjects and evaluating their students, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subjects.

- C. **College and university faculty members are citizens, members of learned professions, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline**, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As persons of learning and as educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not institutional spokespersons.

<https://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure>

Academic Freedom

D. All members of the WPI Faculty, whether they are tenured, are on the tenure track during their probationary period, or hold secured or short-term nontenure-track appointments, have academic freedom as defined in this Constitution. As members of the WPI Faculty, they are **guaranteed non-retaliation** with respect to appointment decisions and other conditions of employment for exercising the full range of academic freedom in all their contributions to the University including participation in its governance. Their right to express their views without reprisal is secured by access to all procedures described in this Faculty Handbook.