

Minutes
Senate Scholastic Standards Committee
November 9, 2004 meeting
(Approved Dec. 15, 2004)

In Attendance: John DeWolf, Lynne Goodstein, Jane Goldman, Steve Jarvi, Andrew Moiseff, Kathryn Myers, Krista Rodin, Stuart Sidney, Jeffrey von Munkwitz-Smith, David Wagner. Invited Guest: Gerald Gianutsos (Member of Plagiarism Task Force).

1. The 10/13/04 minutes were approved.
2. The committee was informed that a subcommittee was formed last year to look into course evaluations. Krista Rodin was chairperson of the subcommittee. A recurring concern about these evaluations has been to determine the purpose of this survey instrument and to determine how the information is used. At a recent meeting of the SEC one member felt that calling it a "Student Evaluation" was inappropriate and a more suitable descriptive name would be something like "Student Survey".

The provost has received information that suggests that the evaluations may be subject to racial and gender bias. The committee discussed how a student's background and expectations might affect the ratings they give; Information received from the provost shows that certain faculty and graduate students have concerns about bias in the surveys.
3. The committee was informed that the Graduate Faculty Council has already passed a motion that allows Faculty to remove an AUDIT designation from a Graduate Student transcript by notifying the registrar. The GFC did point out the need for faculty to advise any auditors of their expectations with respect to attendance and/or other requirements. We did not pursue this issue, at this time, to allow time for discussion of the Plagiarism Task Force report.
4. The interdepartmental program document was discussed. Diane Lillo-Martin requested, by email, that interdepartmental minors should also be covered. The committee felt that in many cases, interdepartmental minors already had a clear line-of-authority to the host departments and therefore faculty appointments, resources, and plans-of-study would be covered by existing policies or the present document. We did recognize, however, that some interdepartmental minors were not associated with departments and would therefore need policy guidelines. The committee approved the present interdepartmental program document (10-0-0) with the intent that INTD programs and interdepartmental minors could be addressed separately or by amending the current document in the future. The document has been sent to the provost for comment, and will be presented to the SEC with our request to present it to the Senate for information and discussion.
5. Prof. Gianutsos joined the committee to discuss the report of the Plagiarism Task Force.

We commented that this is an institution-wide issue and should not be confined to undergraduates alone. The institution-wide relevance should be made explicit in the report, possibly through the president's statement.

The report concentrates on the "Student Code" which is specific for undergraduates. We recommend that the report be submitted to the Graduate Faculty Council for their consideration and possible endorsement so that all students, graduate and undergraduate, would be covered by similar policies.

The committee began discussing the specific recommendations of the task force.

Rec. #1 - Student Pledge: The task force suggested that students sign a pledge that included "...[students hadn't] committed or witnessed any other act that would result in dishonesty, plagiarism or fraud." Requiring the "or witnessed" phrase presents problems concerning establishing what a student's responsibility is if he/she observes an inappropriate act, and also holds an individual student responsible for their interpretation of the acts of others. We suggested the deletion of "or witnessed" to concentrate on the student's own, individual behavior: "I have not violated the Univ. of Ct. student code." We also discussed the logistics of signing these pledges, in particular, whether a statement should accompany each assignment and how to deal with digital submissions and projects (e.g., art or sculpture)? The consensus was that implementation of the policy should be left to the discretion of individual instructors. Instructors would receive guidance and education concerning the implementation of the pledge, and other policies, as part of recommendation #9 "Education of faculty ...".

Rec. #2 - Handling of violations: The logistics of handling misconduct violations were discussed. For example, accommodations must be made for situations occurring at the end of the semester when a student may not be available on campus to 'meet' about the alleged violation. Similarly, in the case of on-line courses, the students may not be available for a 'meeting.' It was suggested that the intent of "... instructors are expected to discuss any allegations... directly with the student..." should actually be that instructors notify students of the alleged misconduct and offer them a chance to discuss the allegation and/or sanction(s). Similarly, "... the instructor shall meet with the student..." which puts the onus on the instructor to arrange a meeting should be more flexible as in "...the instructor shall request that the student clarify or explain the alleged misconduct...". The timing of the notifications and role of various officials (e.g., Dean of Students, Dean of School or College) should be clarified.

Rec. #4 - Transcript notation: The appearance of an academic misconduct designator on a transcript should only take place after due process (e.g., all appeals) have been completed. For a "one time" violation, the student could petition to have the designator removed after completion of a special seminar. The student would have to pay an administrative fee for the seminar - the fee structure should be supervised by the Senate. If a student has multiple violations that occur at the same time, are these considered "one time" for the purpose of taking the seminar and petitioning for removal of the designator?

The discussion of the report was cut short due to time constraints. We will schedule a special meeting of the SSC devoted solely to discussing the Task Force report.