14 January 2004

Minutes of a meeting of the Faculty Senate Student Affairs committee, held Tuesday 2:00 pm January 13, 2004, ITEC conference room, 2nd floor, Otto Olsen Building

Present: Stan Lightner (chair), Davin Jones, Zach Nelson, Sandy Cook-Fong, Lois Flagstad, Glen Tracy, Janet Wilke, Trudy de Goede (recorder)

Guests: Marilyn Hadley, Dean of the College of Education; Kathy Smith, Dean of the College of Business; Jon Wheeler, Area Coordinator, Centennial Towers East; Maha Yunus, Chairperson, Council of Academic Chairs.

Lightner opened the meeting by saying that a Student Code of Conduct exists and is accessible, but students, and also many faculty, don’t know about it or where or how to access it. Our guests were invited to join us today to help the committee address the information and access problem.

Hadley: students will only look at it when they need to know something

Cook-Fong: faculty need to know about the academic dishonesty policy

Smith: can a faculty member ask the VCAA for a list of transgressors?

Cook-Fong: no, the VCAA will release information about specific cases only

Smith: what is the faculty decision process, especially if the student is a multiple offender?

Flagstad: the VCAA will refer an incident to a hearing board, the board then determines sanctions

Flagstad introduced Jon Wheeler. Wheeler represents Flagstad on the Judicial Board, he knows the Student Code of Conduct and the Academic Integrity Policy very well

Lightner: there were flaws in the earlier version of the Code of Conduct, there was no provision for due process

Flagstad: academic and behavioral issues are different and have to be treated differently, but may occur in any one student’s conduct, such instances have occurred since the code was changed. In those instances the VCAA referred the matters to the Dean of Students

Smith: what if a student harasses a professor?
Wheeler: that kind of problem is addressed in the code

Lightner: only the Colleges of Education and Business have a standard format for the syllabus, therefore not all class syllabi on campus have a standard statement about academic integrity, that's an information transmission problem. Beyond that faculty need to know about student conduct resources centralized in the VCAA's office

Yunus: department chairs should notify their faculty about the existence and location of the code, perhaps there should be a link to it from each department’s webpage

Lightner: it exists as a pdf file, (Lightner) has put it on his syllabus

Smith: we need multiple approaches to publicizing it, (Smith) will raise it in a meeting of the business college chairs

Lightner: perhaps Yunus can raise it in a meeting of the Council of Chairs

Hadley: now that Lightner has raised the problem of communication of the information, the deans can address it

Yunus: it would be good if a committee member, perhaps Flagstad, could attend a Council of Chairs meeting

Flagstad: the policy should also be described in new faculty orientation

Smith: the Colleges of Business and Education give their new faculty booklets with introductory information about the institution, it could be included there

Lightner: returning students may be unaware of the academic dishonesty policy, especially since summer orientation for new students, a logical place to raise the issue, does not include them

Wilke: the internet confuses students as to what is appropriate and inappropriate conduct regarding information use for academic purposes

Yunus: Social Work faculty have talked about the syllabus as a contract between faculty and students. The syllabus should include a sentence about the code, perhaps the student could sign something indicating that they have read it

Flagstad: should we consider the issue from the vantage point of academic honesty, or an honor code?
Hadley: many students cheat in high school, even more of them do so in college, they don’t understand the academic integrity issue

Smith: students often think cheating is not wrong, and they also resist reporting cheating by one another

Lightner: is the committee’s charge changing? Should we consider adding an honor code

Smith: the faculty have to inform students of academic honesty expectations, they should use due process in addressing problems, students need to know their actions have consequences

Lightner: should the Faculty Senate consider a resolution regarding putting information about the Code of Conduct in class syllabi?

Hadley: how does a professor know if a student is cheating

There was a discussion about software available for identifying plagiarized text

Lightner: will talk to Tim Obermier about placing this question on the faculty senate agenda

Lightner: if a student cheats as a first occasion, s/he is corrected and given a second chance. Should a student be allowed to improve a grade if a poor grade was the result of cheating? The committee is probably not unanimous in its response to such a question.

Cook-Fong: such a grade stays in the transcript, but is not reflected in the student’s GPA

Smith: at one time there was a “technical F”, it figured into the GPA

Lightner to Flagstad: what is a typical three-time offender sanction? Flagstad: in one instance the student received 3 Fs, this was after discussions between the student with the professor, the department chair, and the VCAA

Wheeler: this kind of repeat offence hasn’t come before the Judicial Board yet. The board can expel or suspend a student. It is better to have that decision come from the board than to have it come from an individual, it creates a stronger sense of fairness

Lightner: is there a maximum number of offences? Wheeler: there is no maximum stated in the manual. Flagstad: three offences from one person raises suspicions.
Lightner: is there a difference in treatment of offences between graduates and undergraduates?

Various responses: there have been no such graduate instances, the graduate school is a system entity, the professor handles the matter

Yunus: should faculty be required to report violations as a matter of standard procedure?

Lightner: faculty are now required to do so

Smith: do deans get copies of lists of cheating students?

Cook-Fong: the dean is informed of individuals within the college

Yunus: a standard procedure creates clarity for the instructor

Smith: the document link should be in the syllabus

Yunus: there should be an academic honesty webpage

Nelson: the pdf document is long, but it is searchable

Jones: students won’t go to a website on their own initiative

Wheeler: if you tell them the information is there you are not liable if they don’t access it, you have fulfilled your due process obligation

Lightner: should there be an article in the Antelope regarding academic dishonesty?

Lightner: if a student is suspended can they enroll elsewhere, earn credits, and then transfer those credits back here

Flagstad: that can happen

Lightner: can Faculty Senate address that problem?

Flagstad: the Academic Standards committee might have done some work on this problem

Tracy: re plagiarizing, cutting and pasting from existing documents might not be recognized by the student as an academic dishonesty problem, such a student might benefit by academic counseling

Wheeler: that is forced speech, it does not violate a student’s rights
Cook-Fong: when the student doesn’t understand the dishonest conduct we should emphasize education rather than punishment

Tracy: students can be very fragile, a student may need a one-to-one conversation

Yunus: faculty should be required to put a statement regarding academic dishonesty in the syllabus

de Goede: that might be an academic freedom issue

Lightner: that’s why a Faculty Senate resolution is needed

Yunus: accreditation will sometimes impose things such as syllabus contents too

Smith: that’s one advantage of a standardized syllabus, it can help with accreditation

Lightner: NCATE even specifies fonts

Lightner: there is consensus within the committee for a Faculty Senate resolution, (Lightner) will draft one

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm

Respectfully submitted
Trudy de Goede, recorder