

[In these minutes: Scholastic Dishonesty within the Law School, Updates]

STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY COMMITTEE (SAIC)

MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2009

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view of, nor are they binding on the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Tom Shield (Chair), Lisa Anderson, Arthur Carlson, Dana Davis, Sharon Dzik, Jennifer Goodnough, Kendall King, Laura Coffin Koch, Randy Moore, Andrew Olson, Lesley Scibora, Eric Watkins.

REGRETS: Sarah Angerman.

GUESTS: Erin Keyes, Carl Warren.

1. SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY ALLEGATIONS HANDLED WITHIN THE LAW SCHOOL

Tom Shield introduced Erin Keyes, Assistant Dean for Students, and Professor Carl Warren, Honor Code Investigator, from the Law School to speak about handling scholastic dishonesty cases in the Law School.

Erin Keyes stated that all students are provided the Rules of Scholastic Requirements, what is required to graduate, and the Law School Honor Code during orientation. The Rules of Scholastic Requirements are being revised this year and the Honor Code, which has been in place since 1987, will be modernized next year. She would appreciate this committee's insight for this process.

The policy requires students to report scholastic dishonesty violations in class, practice settings, and exams; most exams do not have proctors present throughout the exam. The scope of the current policy covers all academic matters which is defined as any activity that affects a student's grades or credits. However, scholastic dishonesty in publication work is still a gray area in the policy.

Violations of the policy cover 1) exam issues of sharing or timeliness, 2) research assignment plagiarism, 3) dishonest academic achievement on transcripts, resumes, and applications, and 4) a catch-all that covers unfair advantages in the evaluation process. The single biggest issue that they see is plagiarism.

Erin Keyes said that the Law School has an Honor Code Council that is composed of nine students (three from each year) and three faculty. This Council is used very rarely, since most cases are handled informally, but they can take action if a problem arises.

She stated that the current process is for scholastic dishonesty reports to be made to her or Professor Warren. There is an equal split of reports being made by faculty and other students. Professor Warren stated that he then investigates the matter for the instructor. This protects against inequities and takes the process out of the sole control of the instructor, although they are always involved in the resolution.

Erin Keyes noted that once the matter is investigated she will meet with the student to ask for their response. The intent is to use a collaborative process to reach an informal resolution, which ends with a letter being placed in a student's Law School file.

The purpose of the policies is to tie a student's time in the program to the expectations of the profession. The Law School is also responsible for certifying a student for fitness of his or her character upon graduation. As most students are likely not aware of the current process, she wants to get students involved in the revisions.

Professor Warren stated that most students that he investigates are being charged due to carelessness, inattention to detail, negligence, recklessness, or bad judgment due to stress. More education for students is necessary.

Erin Keyes stated that for an informal resolution, the student must accept responsibility for the action and make a statement, which can be in writing. The consequences are then determined and if the student agrees, a memorandum with all the details is developed and signed by the student and Professor Warren. This information is not shared with anyone outside the registration staff, Bar application process, and herself. When taking the Bar exam, all students are asked to sign a release of information from their file including how any incident was handled.

Professor Warren noted that there have been no hearings in four years. A hearing is only held if the student disagrees with the investigation or sanction. Then he sends the complaint to the Council for a hearing which recommends sanctions. There is a written appeal within the college that is heard by the full faculty.

Q: Does the Law School have a common definition for scholastic dishonesty?

A: Yes. It uses the definition from the Student Conduct Code but this definition could be expanded for their use since they must provide reports to the Board of Law Examiners for students taking the Bar Exam.

Q: What is the Law School enrollment?

A: It is just over 800 as there are 230-260 students per year in each class of the JD with an additional 30-25 LLM students, a few Humphrey fellows, and some foreign exchange students.

Q: What percentage of University graduate apply?

A: 40 percent of the students are from in-state.

Q: How many scholastic dishonesty cases are there per year?

A: There are 5-10 cases per year.

Q: What is the status of scholastic dishonesty reports?

A: These reports are currently stored internally but the School is moving to disclose this information to OSCAI.

Members made the following comments:

- Cases still need to be reported centrally to OSCAI in case the student had previous violations
- Current students should be checked with OSCAI

2. OSCAI UPDATES

Sharon Dzik said that there were 378 cases in 2007-08 and 696 in 2008-09. She will present the annual report at the next meeting. Scholastic dishonesty cases have also increased from 115 in 2007-08 to 163 in 2008-09. Her figures include 60-70 behavioral consultations this past year which are usually very intensive when they are being handled.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business, Tom Shield thanked the members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate