

[In these minutes: Program proposal for handling scholastic dishonesty cases]

STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY COMMITTEE (SAIC)

MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2013

[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: Dana Davis (Chair), Kimberly Clarke, Bradley Conley, Arthur Erdman, Jennifer Goodnough, Kacey Gregerson, Stacy Ingraham, Laura Coffin Koch, Loren Kosloske, Susan LoRusso, Corrie Marion, LeAnn Snow.

REGRETS: Sharon Dzik.

ABSENT: Trevor Buttermore.

GUESTS: Jessica Kuecker Grotjohn.

1. OSCAI UPDATES

Jessica Kuecker Grotjohn reported that the OSCAI surveys, reviewed at the September meeting, are being sent today. She has also been meeting with Student Conduct Code contacts in each college. When asked if they still want to receive letters, their response is yes since they can use that information to follow-up with faculty.

2. PROGRAM PROPOSAL FOR HANDLING SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY CASES

Jessica Kuecker Grotjohn talked about a program proposal for handling scholastic dishonesty cases that is based on a Restorative Justice model. Under this system, faculty would still issue a report to OSCAI and determine the sanction, but they would also be asked to check if a student could participate in this program. If no, such as for an egregious charge, then the regular process is followed. If yes, then the student would be told about the program when they meet with OSCAI staff and they would have the option to participate or not. In order to participate, a student would need to accept responsibility for the scholastic dishonesty charge. If the student disputes their responsibility or the sanction from the faculty member, then they would not be eligible for this program.

The program would involve the accused student participating in a facilitated group discussion with other accused students as well as faculty, staff, and student members from the University. The accused student would explain what they did and then the other participants would talk about the impact of those actions on themselves. Following this session, the accused student would have to participate in an educational experience. By successfully completing both parts, the charge would become non-disciplinary, meaning that it would not be reported on most background checks sent to OSCAI, after one year or upon graduation.

The goal is that by having students buy-in to participate, and by having community members share their views, the student will have a more meaningful understanding of how their actions affect the University as a whole.

Jessica Kuecker Grotjohn said that if approval was provided to start this program, then a pilot would be conducted first.

Members made the following comments:

- Program appears similar to taking a plea in court
- Do all students have a due process right to participate in this program?
- Could a hearing body require that a student participate in this program?
- Some faculty might be concerned that students will just agree to have a clean record
- Faculty will still have the first chance to allow the student to participate or not
- Group discussion participants will require training and a script to follow
- There will need to be a trained facilitator at each session to enforce ground rules and make sure that the student is learning from the process
- Group participants should be from areas in which the accused student is interested or is taking classes
- Program could be a way to re-educate international students
- Program would allow a student to hear the same message on scholastic dishonesty from a wide variety of people
- If this program follows a Restorative Justice model, any student who does not complete the entire program would be referred back to OSCAI, but for students who do complete the program, recidivism rates should hopefully be low

Q: What happens if a student completes the program but then has another scholastic dishonesty violation?

A: No student would be eligible to participate in the program a second time. If a program participant has a repeat Student Conduct Code violation, OSCAI still has the original file and it would be reopened for the second case.

Q: Does participation in this program replace the faculty's sanction?

A: No, it is in addition to that sanction and it meant to address a faculty concern that one charge can follow the student throughout their academic career and when they leave the University.

Q: What does non-disciplinary mean?

A: These are violations that are not reported on the majority of background checks that are performed by OSCAI, but a file is still maintained by OSCAI. Some government background checks require that all violations be noted, so these would need to be included, even if the student completed the program.

Q: Can a student dispute the sanction and still participate in the program?

A: No, as the student needs to take responsibility to participate. If the student has any dispute, then the case would follow the current path.

Q: Does OSCAI have the necessary resources for this program?

A: Resources have not yet been discussed as this program is in the planning stages. It is being brought to different groups to get their buy-in before a formal program is put in place and resources are required.

Q: Is there an issue with student privacy when participating in the group discussion?

A: When a student decides to participate in the program, which includes the group discussion, they will waive their right to privacy. However, few identifiers will be used during their discussions to minimize any risks.

Q: How will community members be recruited for the group discussions?

A: Faculty who use OSCAI resources might be interested in participating, as well as other people, such as librarians, who discuss these topics.

Q: For the educational experience, what will be tangible options that relate to scholastic dishonesty?

A: OSCAI will try to use existing resources and partner with other office, such as the Libraries and Writing Center, which might already offer programming or workshops on scholastic dishonesty. The facilitator will have a list of available options, but the group should also have the ability to discuss other options.

Q: Will people from outside the University serve on the groups?

A: No.

Q: Will other students be able to serve on the groups?

A: Yes as the accused student should also hear from other students. Each group should have at least one faculty and one student member.

Q: How would this program affect international students?

A: International students are over-represented in scholastic dishonesty cases, and many times they are very concerned about their record but choose to accept responsibility and not go to a hearing. This program could be helpful for this group of students.

Q: Is a similar program in place at any other institution?

A: No.

Q: Is there a demand for this type of program?

A: The number of scholastic dishonesty cases is rising each year, and very few choose to go to a hearing, so it appears that there should be a large possible pool. It will then depend on how many faculty decide to allow program participation and how many students follow-through to completion.

Q: Can a student choose to participate in the program at a later time?

A: No. When the faculty's sanction is sent to the student, they are provided five days to either accept or request a hearing. They would need to decide in this same timeframe if they were willing to participate in the program.

Q: What has the greatest impact in the Restorative Justice model, the people involved or the program?

A: Both contribute. The program structure helps but the way that the people speak to the offender is impactful.

Q: What will encompass the talking points for the group discussion?

A: The student will be asked to describe their action. The facilitator will then have all group participants speak, encouraging them to focus on their feelings and the impact from the actions. The intent is not to lecture or beat-up the accused student.

The members were supportive of this program but would like an update on timelines and the ability to review draft materials.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

Dana Davis noted that items being considered for the November agenda include an overview of how scholastic dishonesty is presented at new faculty orientation and orientation and/or Welcome Week for students. With no further business, he thanked the members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate