[In these minutes: Turnitin.com, Role of OSAI/SJA in scholastic dishonesty cases]

STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY COMMITTEE (SAIC)

MINUTES

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2006
2:30 – 4:00 PM
510 MORRILL HALL

[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: Shawn Curley (Chair), Sarah Angerman, Mark Bellcourt, Lorna Buikema, Sharon Dzik, Robert Pepin, Abbie Stohlmann, Micky Trent.

REGRETS: Jonathan Bringewatt, Francisco Diez-Gonzalez, Linda Jones, Laura Coffin Koch, Paul Myers, Christopher Zellmer.

GUESTS: Linda Ellinger, Kathy Skelton.

1. TURNITIN.COM

Linda Ellinger said that joined the meeting to discuss the use of Turnitin.com and its outcomes. She made the following comments:

- She is not sure if this is the perfect tool since there are other good ones available
- Its use has moral and ethical dimensions
- If faculty use it as a tool, it can be used welled, but it can also be misused
- It does not replace good teaching or prevention
- Some faculty are resistant to its use
- It does not detect plagiarism, but still asks the faculty member to make a determination
- It is a teaching tool when used well and a digital cop when used poorly
- Writing departments do not like it or use it
- Papers uploaded for checking become part of the program; some people are not sure if this is legal but this issue has not been tested in court
- There was a surge in use Fall 2005
- Largest users are the beginning Biology sequence courses
- Contract is renegotiated each year; last year the University received free WebCT integration
- A decision has not been made yet about next year
- Some faculty use Google, but this program has its limits
- Will catch cases of students submitting papers from other students
- Turnitin.com database is not searchable from outside

Q: Is its use by faculty teaching undergraduates or graduates?

A: Almost all faculty using it are for undergraduates. Many graduate student materials are not available digitally, so its use for those purposes are not as helpful.

Q: Do all freshmen seminar classes use it?

A: A handful do, but most do not. The rationale is that these faculty work closely with the students and will recognize a student's work.

Sharon Dzik said that she will start tracking cases that are filed with her office after using Turnitin.com.

A member said that when OSAI sees a high number of reports from a faculty member, a letter should be sent informing faculty of their options.

2. ROLE OF OSAI/SJA IN SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY CASES

Sharon Dzik distributed diagrams of the previous, current, and proposed processes in place for reporting cases of scholastic dishonesty. The committee then had an off-the-record discussion of ways to improve the process.

Members suggested that OSAI contact all faculty who report cases. OSAI should thank them for reporting the case, explain the faculty member's options, and then inform them of the following process. This process should not be meant to offend faculty, but just form a better bond between OSAI and the reporting parties.

Q: How quickly are cases handled?

A: OSAI tries to handle all cases within two weeks of being reported.

Q: Can OSAI contact faculty via email?

A: Phone receives a better response and allows for more dialogue.

Q: Does the reporting process vary by college or department?

A: Yes. Some colleges make sure that all cases are reported, while other colleges never report cases.

Q: Are many reports made at the end of the semester?

A: Yes. If students do not get their mail, they usually find out when they check their grades.

Q: Is there a reason that students are not sent messages via email?

A: This was a topic at a recent conference. While the University considers email an official mode of communication, the information is still more formal when on letterhead. Students also leave email on screen for others to read. Email can be used a follow-up, especially if a student initiates its use.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

Shawn Curley announced that the March meeting would be cancelled. With no further business, he thanked the members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate