
Report of the Senate Committee on Students and Educational Policy (SCSEP)

General Committee Charge:

The Committee oversees and advises the Executive Committee on matters relating to the University's policies and procedures on the admission and instruction of students, including academic integrity, admissions policies and administration, evaluation of teaching, examinations and grading, academic experiences, educational opportunities (such as study abroad), student records, disciplinary systems and the campus environment. In general, the Committee deals with the matters covered in section IV of the University's *Handbook for Faculty and Academic Administrators*.

2013-2014 Specific Charges

1. Get an update from Vice Provost Andy Binns on the status of the School of Arts & Sciences Committee on Undergraduate Education proposed changes for the improvement of current academic integrity procedures, policies and practices.

2. Work with the Library to finalize the Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy FAQ list and help to disseminate this information to faculty and students.

3. Continue discussing with Eric Furda, dean of admissions, the strategies that are likely to yield applications from academically gifted students from underrepresented groups, including those with disadvantaged backgrounds. Monitor progress to expand Penn's reach in local Philadelphia high schools as well as nationally in targeted community colleges.

4a. Continue discussing with Vice Provost Andy Binns the online course evaluation system, and consider whether slated improvements address faculty concerns. Continue to advocate for the inclusion of new polling features in the online course evaluation system.

4b. Discuss the course evaluation process for online courses in consultation with Professor Edward Rock, director of Open Course Initiatives and Andy Binns, vice provost for education.

5. Review and discuss this Committee's general charge, as provided in the Senate Rules, and identify what you believe to be the most pressing issues facing the Faculty, students and educational programs over the next few years. In light of your discussions, recommend to the Senate Executive Committee two or three high-priority charges for the Committee on Students and Educational Policy to undertake in academic year 2014-2015. In explaining these charges, outline any appropriate actions you suppose the Senate might conceivably take after its review.

Accomplishments:

1. *Get updates on proposed changes for the improvement of current academic integrity procedures, policies and practices.*

Vice Provost for Education Andy Binns reported that his office has been following up on suggestions made by the Student Committee on Undergraduate Education (SCUE) to improve academic integrity procedures, policies and practices. The Office of Student Conduct (OSC) is now fully staffed, which has resulted in fewer student complaints.

The SCUE report determined that academic integrity issues at Penn are handled in an inconsistent manner. This is because each faculty member can choose to deal with the situation in a number of ways, either with the assistance of OSC or on their own. Vice Provost Binns believes some of the inconsistency is due to reluctance of faculty to report students because the minimum sanction for an academic integrity violation is a reportable offense.

One suggestion from the SCUE report was to develop a first report system, where faculty members could report an academic integrity incident without sanctioning the student. The first report system would have an accumulating database, which would automatically trigger a response if multiple reports were made about the same student. Vice Provost Binns discussed potential problems with such a system: namely, no school of Penn's size has implemented such a system.

Director of OSC Michele Goldfarb has suggested rewriting the Charter of the University of Pennsylvania Student Disciplinary System to allow OSC to impose sanctions on students that are not reportable on their records. Provost Vincent Price supports this option and the undergraduate deans are considering it. Vice Provost Binns suggested beginning the pro-

cess of drafting changes to the Charter this summer, with the process of approving these changes to begin in the fall.

Vice Provost Binns urged faculty to include information about academic integrity in their class syllabi and to discuss it in the first class, including how cheating will be defined in the class and what the consequences of cheating will be. There is suggested language available on both the OSC and the Center for Teaching & Learning websites.

SCSEP Recommendations

The SCSEP supports a gradual overhaul of the Penn Student Disciplinary System, with the goal of creating coherent policies that inform the actions of all faculty and students. The SCSEP supports changes to the Penn Charter that would allow OSC to impose sanctions on students that are not reportable on their records. The SCSEP also supports the development of an online first report system that could first be tested by faculty in one of the undergraduate schools.

2. *Develop FAQ List for Faculty and Students on Intellectual Property and Copyright Policies.*

Following up on meetings from the previous year, the SCSEP met with Associate General Counsel Robert Terrell, Scholarly Communication Librarian Shawn Martin and Associate Librarian, Collection Development & Management, Martha Brogan. A FAQ list was generated that provides guidance on intellectual property and copyright policies that are often confusing to faculty and students. Updated content with link to FAQ was posted at the Library website in March 2014: <http://guides.library.upenn.edu/copyright>

Practices for open access journal article publishing vary by discipline, but are moving towards open access, in part due to the requirement from Coursera and other open learning initiatives to employ open access materials. The Libraries believe the impetus for the move to open access must come from the faculty creators of scholarship, and that it is in the best interests of the faculty to retain copyrights of their work. Penn has instituted a Scholarly Commons Repository, which collects the scholarly output of researchers at Penn in a freely-accessible archive.

To help faculty and students to resolve challenging issues, a Copyright Clinic is held on Tuesdays at 3 p.m. in Room 125 at the Weigle Information Commons in the Van Pelt-Dietrich Library.

SCSEP Recommendations

The SCSEP encourages Penn faculty to spend time reviewing the Penn library website, as these are important and complicated issues that impact many aspects of teaching and scholarly work. Faculty should explore their options for publishing scholarly work in open access formats and reach out to Penn Library staff if they run into obstacles. Finally, to help educate students about copyright information contained in the FAQ and updated library website, the relevant link should be included in Penn's graduate student handbooks: <http://guides.library.upenn.edu/copyright>

3. *SCSEP Meeting with Dean of Admissions, Eric Furda*

SCSEP learned how Penn Admissions works with many different partner organizations to reach talented URM (underrepresented minority) students. These organizations reach students at all stages in the pipeline, and the majority of them are based on socioeconomic criteria rather than strictly on race. About half of the URM students enrolled come from one of these partner organizations. The other half is identified by student searches. Penn is doing well enrolling URM students, but this is a very competitive space, with many peer institutions offering merit scholarships in addition to need-based financial aid. URM students are still underrepresented in the Early Decision pool, which is only 6% URM applicants compared to 8-12% URM applicants in the general admissions pool.

Admissions believes that it has identified a broad range of scores that indicate whether an admitted student will feel academically comfortable at Penn, especially in cases where the high school curriculum is lacking. In general, applicants need to self-report an A or A- high school average, with combined SATs of around 2100 to be considered competitive. Wharton has pinpointed a baseline math SAT score that students need to be successful in its program.

(continued on page 4)

Report of the Senate Committee on Students and Educational Policy (SCSEP) *(continued from page 3)*

Relationships with community colleges (as a potential source of low-income, high-achieving students with proven ability to complete college work) have not been expanded in recent years. One reason is that Penn does not have plans to complete articulation agreements with such colleges, which would automatically guarantee the transfer of college credits.

Recruiting of international students has been limited by lack of funds for financial aid and increasing competition from peer institutions. Penn only provides need-blind admissions to students from Mexico and Canada. In other parts of the world, admissions decisions are made with input from Student Financial Services and guided by efforts to get a wide range of international representation. The Penn Compact 2020's focus on international student aid will likely provide additional funding for more students to attend from the most disadvantaged areas of the world.

Dean Furda also addressed Penn's branding issue, which grows in significance as the number of high school graduates in the Northeast continues to decline. He noted three priorities in working with Steve MacCarthy, Vice President of University Communications: Penn's overall reputation; Penn's no-loan policy and the availability of financial aid; and what Penn graduates are doing. Penn's current students are effectively being employed as ambassadors for the undergraduate program. Penn's number of applicants has increased by 6% each year over the past few years, but some peer schools are rising at a faster rate. The 2014 admissions numbers showed a favorable uptick, with applications increasing to 35,788 (a 14.4% increase from 2013) and the acceptance rate decreasing to 9.9% (from 12.1% in 2013).

SCSEP Recommendation

The SCSEP notes that many of Penn's peer institutions have fared better in recent years in increasing student diversity, but that Penn's 2014 admissions statistics signal a great improvement. Penn should continue implementing strategies to increase the total number of applications. New resources will likely need to be deployed to increase the pool of applications from qualified under-represented minorities and first-generation college students, and to improve student recruitment in this very competitive arena. Penn has a very dynamic urban campus and broad course offerings that should appeal to a diverse student body, but many high school students outside of the mid-Atlantic region are still not familiar with Penn as an Ivy League university.

4a. *Get updates on the online course evaluation system, and consider whether slated improvements address faculty concerns.*

The Committee met with Vice Provost for Education Andy Binns to learn about the status of the online course evaluation system. In general, there appears to have been no change (or improvement) in the online course evaluation system in the past year.

Vice Provost Binns noted that Penn's contract with the online course evaluation vendor expires in 2016, and his office is just starting to solicit feedback from the deans and faculty on how the system is working for them. Since Penn has partnered with Canvas, one suggestion is to find a way to integrate the two systems. In response to an earlier concern about the length of time for the course evaluations, the standard has become to open the evaluations on the last week of classes and close them at the end of finals. Vice Provost Binns noted that the response rates on course evaluations have been excellent, with more than 80% of students responding.

SCSEP Feedback

SCSEP has ongoing concerns about the lack of control that faculty have over when students evaluate the course and lack of ability to add or modify questions that are posed to students. In particular, the course evaluation system has identified student cheating in some courses. Faculty should be given flexibility, for example, to pose additional questions within the course evaluation system that will help to identify patterns of cheating. Along these lines, it is a positive development that the Center for Teaching & Learning now offers a midterm course evaluation process called Course Feedback for Instructors (CFI), which is customizable and confidential.

4b. *Discuss the course evaluation process for online courses.*

SCSEP met with Professor Edward Rock, director of Open Course Initiatives, Dr. Jacqueline Candido, director of LPS Online Learning & Digital Engagement and Kristine Rabberman, director of Academic Affairs,

SAS Division of Professional and Liberal Education. SCSEP learned from Dr. Rock that each School has its own process for approving a *Coursera* course proposal, but the process must culminate in the Dean signing off on the proposal. The proposal then goes to the Faculty Advisory Committee, which can either recommend, decline or ask for revision and resubmission. The Faculty Advisory Committee's recommendations then go to the Provost and Professor. Rock for final approval. The number of new course proposals has stabilized at roughly 10-20 per year.

Some *Coursera* courses are now being used for outreach purposes to help prepare high school students for college-level work. Courses such as Precalculus (under development) may also help to bridge a skills gap for on-campus college students with weaker high school preparation.

Penn's LPS (and previously CGS) has offered online courses since 2000, most during the summer session. These courses are evaluated much like normal course offerings and are generally as well received as standard lecture courses. Unlike *Coursera* courses, LPS courses are open to a limited number of paying students, and faculty have much more freedom with distribution of course materials. Online courses are also frequently offered in many of the professional graduate programs.

SCSEP Feedback

Many Penn faculty, across several Schools, have gained significant experience in creating and administering online courses in the past 15 years. Penn can leverage this experience for new initiatives, including teaching innovations in the form of "flipped" classrooms, educational opportunities for busy professionals and increasing outreach to underserved students, locally, nationally and internationally, through *Coursera* as well as Penn-specific online platforms.

5. Consider Charges for the Coming Year.

At its April meeting, the Committee reviewed the status of its charges and identified areas for continued work in the coming academic year. These topics are summarized below:

Continue discussing with Dean Furda, the strategies that are likely to yield applications from academically gifted students from under-represented groups, including those with disadvantaged backgrounds.

Meet with Vice Provost Binns, and Director of OSC Michele Goldfarb, to review proposed changes to the Penn Charter that would allow OSC to impose sanctions on students that are not reportable on their records. Get updates on status of first report system.

Get updates from Professor Ed Rock, director of Open Course Initiatives, about local academic outreach efforts employing *Coursera* materials. Other groups at Penn involved in providing academic enrichment opportunities for local Philadelphia students should be included in this conversation.

Discuss with CAPS representatives and other Penn administrators how Penn is trying to support student mental health and general wellbeing. In particular, how is Penn working to create supportive environments for undergraduate and graduate students who come to Penn from very different cultural, political and socioeconomic backgrounds?

Discuss with representatives from Penn Abroad and International Internship Program how Penn is supporting students who want to participate in summer study abroad programs.

SCSEP Membership 2013-2014

Paulo Arratia, School of Engineering & Applied Science/
Mechanical & Applied Mechanics
Emily Blumberg, Perelman School of Medicine/Emergency Medicine
Ivan Dmochowski, School of Arts & Sciences/Chemistry, *Chair*
Sharon Irving, School of Nursing
Emma Meagher, Perelman School of Medicine/
Experimental Therapeutics
Carol Muller, School of Arts & Sciences/Music
Jorge Santiago-Aviles, School of Engineering & Applied Science/
Electrical & Systems Engineering

Ex Officio Members:

Dwight Jaggard, School of Engineering & Applied Science/
Electrical & Systems Engineering, *Senate Chair*
Claire Finkelstein, Law School, *Senate Chair-Elect*