

Rutgers University Senate
March 27, 2009
Background Information for Discussion of Academic Integrity Policies

Update on Efforts to Develop a New Academic Integrity Policy

At its meeting of May 2, 2008, the University Senate approved the Interim Academic Integrity Policy for a period of two years, beginning with the fall 2008 semester. The Senate also approved the following five additional recommendations:

- that a new Academic Integrity Committee be established before the end of the spring 2008 semester by the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and that the Committee be charged with developing a new comprehensive academic integrity policy.
- that the new Academic Integrity Committee consist of students, faculty, staff, and administrators from all three Rutgers campuses, with students being the largest subgroup on the committee. The Committee should have representation from the University Senate, student government and faculty governance organizations, graduate and professional schools, arts and sciences schools and colleges, the Office of Student Judicial Affairs, and the Office of University Counsel.
- that the process of developing a new academic integrity policy provide opportunities for discussion and input by all students, faculty, staff, and administrators at every step in the process.
- that the new Academic Integrity Committee take a fresh look at all aspects of the Rutgers system for promoting academic integrity, including the philosophy and premises of the academic integrity policy, the programs for educating students and other members of the university community about academic integrity, and the procedures for adjudicating violations of academic integrity.
- that the new Academic Integrity Committee give careful consideration to the special needs of graduate and professional schools in defining, adjudicating, and sanctioning violations of academic integrity or codes of professional ethics by their students.

The interim policy was successfully implemented at the beginning of the fall 2008 semester, thanks to a lot of very hard work by the staff of the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and the Office of the Vice-President for Undergraduate Education in New Brunswick, and the Chancellor's designees in Camden and Newark. It is too soon to tell, however, whether the policy will substantially improve the way allegations of violations of academic integrity are handled.

A new Academic Integrity committee, with the recommended composition, has been formed and charged by VP Furmanski, but this did not occur until the end of the fall 2008 semester; we are thus about a semester behind schedule. The Committee, chaired by M. Cotter, met for the first time on Feb. 3, 2009 and is now hard at work gathering information on AI policies at other public AAU institutions and on student, faculty, and staff experience with the Interim AI Policy.

Questions for Discussion

The AI Committee is firmly committed to obtaining input from members of the university community throughout the process of developing the new permanent AI policy. The Committee is not yet ready to make any concrete proposals regarding the new AI policy. However, there are two questions we are discussing and on which we would like input from members of the Senate; i.e., (i) What aspects of the interim policy might we like to retain in the permanent policy? (ii) Should the new AI policy be based on an honor code?

Evaluation of the Interim AI Policy

The major difference between the Interim Academic Integrity Policy and the previous AI policy is in the handling of nonseparable offenses; i.e., offenses for which suspension or expulsion are not possible sanctions (at least for first offenses). Under the interim policy, faculty members have the choice of handling allegations of nonseparable offenses themselves, following the procedure outlined in the policy, or referring the matter to an Academic Integrity Facilitator (AIF) at the school offering the course in which the alleged violation took place. If the accused student is found responsible for the violation, he or she can appeal the finding of responsibility and/or sanction in writing to the Academic Integrity Review Committee (AIRC). The appeal is considered by an AIRC panel consisting of two students, one faculty member, and a non-voting staff investigator.

One of the issues the AIC must consider is whether faculty or AIF handling of nonseparable offenses, with the option of student appeals to the AIRC, is something we might wish to retain in the permanent AI policy - as is, or in modified form. To that end, we would like to hear about any experiences members of the Senate have had with this aspect of the interim policy,

whether as someone accused of an offense, as a friend of someone so accused, as a faculty member handling an allegation or referring it to an AIF, as an AIF, or as a member of the AIRC.

Possible Institution of an Honor Code

The traditional honor code in place at a number of private colleges and universities, has five elements: (1) an honor pledge, (2) a requirement that students report violations of academic integrity by other students, (3) a student-run judiciary system, (4) unproctored examinations, and (5) very harsh penalties for any violation of the honor code.

As far as the AIC can determine, the only AAU public university that still has a strict honor code of this sort is the University of Virginia. However, there are a growing number of AAU publics that have modified honor code systems, which incorporate some but not all of the five elements above. Three public AAUs with increasingly strict modified honor code systems are (1) Maryland (College Park), (2) Colorado (Boulder), and (2) North Carolina (Chapel Hill). Their systems can be summarized very briefly as follows.

1. *Maryland*. Students are asked to hand-write the honor pledge on all exams, papers, etc. The judiciary system is partially student-administered; however, hearing panels consist of three students and two faculty members and the dean of the accused student's college or school plays a role in determining which allegations go to an Honor Council hearing. Normal penalty for all but the most serious, premeditated offenses is a grade of XF for the course.
(<http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/>)
2. *Colorado*. Student judiciary system administered by the Honor Code Council, which is all students except for one faculty advisor and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Hearings, investigations, sanctioning, etc. are done by students; appeals board has student, faculty, and staff members. Apparently there is no student requirement to report alleged violations by other students. (<http://www.colorado.edu/honorcode/>)
3. *North Carolina*. A completely student-administered system with an honor pledge and a reporting requirement. The normal penalty for a first offense is a failing grade for the course or assignment as recommended by the instructor, and suspension for one full academic semester. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a failing grade for the course or assignment as recommended by the instructor; probation for at least one full academic semester; an additional educational assignment or other requirements as appropriate, and a warning that any subsequent offense will carry a more serious penalty.
(<http://honor.unc.edu/>)

Questions: Should we institute an honor code at Rutgers? Should students be required to report other students for academic integrity violations? To what extent should the judiciary system for violations of academic integrity be student administered?