

## **Committee on Academic & Related Affairs 2007-08 Report**

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### **2007-08 Draft Specific Charges**

1. Examine the impact on student recruitment of the University's focus on global engagement.
2. Review the recruitment initiatives reflecting the Penn Compact's emphasis on increased access for national and international students.
3. Examine how policies for ethical conduct of research, scholarship, and professional education are communicated to all students and how those policies are enforced.
4. Continue to monitor the equity and effectiveness of the University's Early Decision policy in admissions.
5. Delineate the roles of various Penn committees and task forces whose missions involve the promotion and oversight of recreational and intercollegiate athletics; determine recommendations that would assist the Administration in efficiently maintaining an active role for athletics in the life of the Penn community.
6. Review and discuss the committee's general charge and identify two or three issues that should be given highest priority for the committee's work in AY 2008-09.

The Committee decided to combine charges 1, 2 and 4 under the heading "recruitment/ admissions", charge 3 under the heading "Ethics" and charge 5 under "athletics/recreation ". The original intent was to have a subcommittee deal with each of the three groups. But for various reasons, only the Ethics portion was generated by a subcommittee. We will structure this report according to these three headings.

### **Recruitment/Admission**

This academic year coincided with the appointment of a new Dean of Admission. Nonetheless, the committee met with the Acting Director of Admission Eric Kaplan and the Director of International Admissions Elisabeth O'Connell. They provide the following information to the committee.

It generally takes about 18 months to admit a freshman class. The Admissions Office began in January 2008 to recruit the Class of 2013 that will enter in the Fall 2009. The College Board essentially starts the process with student search, which provides access to names of high school students who fit institutionally-defined academic parameters. High school juniors begin their campus visits in February/March. The Admissions Office offers information sessions during the week and tours every day with expanded programming during the summer and fall. In late April Penn joins a consortium of peer institutions to recruit around the country, as well as in Latin America and other international regions. Admitted students are surveyed every few years in an effort to understand their perceptions about admissions and financial aid experience and to benchmark these experiences against several peer institutions.

The Committee was informed about Penn's new financial aid initiatives -- eliminating loans for financially eligible undergraduate students -- in an effort to provide access to economically disadvantaged students.

The committee looked into the early decision process. Penn has maintained early decision although some of our peers have eliminated it. Our early decision application pool is the largest in the US, and we admitted 48% of our class through the early decision program. In recent years, our early applicants have been academically stronger than the regular decision pool. Those who are deferred to the regular round are admitted at the same rate as regular decision candidates. Two of our peers, Harvard and Princeton, have eliminated early programs because they believe that it reduces the number of low-income applicants, but Penn has designed new financial aid programs to encourage low-income students to apply early. It is the view of the Committee that Penn should continue to monitor the income distribution of the Early Decision applicant to ensure that the number of low-income students is maintained.

The geographic distribution and statistics for the Class of 2011 are available at <http://www.admissionsug.upenn.edu/profile>

The Committee studied the impact of student recruitment on the global presence of the University. Currently, though Penn offers some financial aid to international students, the need-blind policy does not extend to these students. We recruit in affluent countries and developing countries. The Committee discussed the extension of need-blind admission to international students.

***Recommendation:***

(1) Penn should continue to monitor the income distribution of the Early Decision applicant to ensure that the number of low-income students in the pool is maintained.

(2) While the issue of need-blind admission for international students should be discussed more carefully, it is however clear that more international students would require increased support, including ESL, writing help, learning resources, orientation, etc.

## **Athletics/recreation**

The Committee met with Director of Athletics, Steven Bilsky; Associate Director of Athletics and Recreation, Mike Diorka; and Director of Recreation, Amy Wagner to discuss the governance of the athletics and recreation programs at Penn.

Historically there were two official committees to address athletics governance: (1) The Trustees Board of Overseers for Athletics, and (2) the University Council Committee on Recreation and Intercollegiate Athletics. The latter was recently subsumed into the present Committee. In addition, there are other committees and task forces: the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, the Sport Club Council, the Gender Equity Task Force for Athletics & Recreation, the NCAA Recertification Committees (formed every 10 years), and other ad hoc task forces that are created as needed.

In academic domain, all student athletes are advised to work with their individual faculty early in the semester to address conflicts in the class schedule and team travel. Most faculty are supportive and flexible.

Athletics and recreation are a major part of the campus master plan for developing the postal lands. Phase I of the plan will include the creation of a new fitness center for the entire campus community and a new intercollegiate weight room

in Franklin Field. This work should begin within 6-8 months and will be complete by 2009-10. Mike Diorka and Amy Wagner described how the fitness center would offer programs such as work out classes to maximize efficient usage. Phase II of the plan will convert 14 acres of postal lands to green space, including two new synthetic fields (one with an air enclosure); 12 outdoor tennis courts; 1 or 2 traditional grass fields for club and intramural sport; a volleyball court; and a new softball stadium.

This phase will be completed within four years. The final phase will include a new swimming facility and indoor track, and will be completed in 6-8 years. All of these developments will provide more access to recreational opportunities to more students.

Hollenback (which houses the current intercollegiate weight room as well as ROTC) needs major facilities improvements, which are long-term. However, the building will remain within Athletics (and ROTC). There will also be a new footbridge that spans the train tracks and connects Hollenback with Bower Field; the footbridge is scheduled for completion by September. The University's Ice Rink is not operated by Athletics but rather by Business Services; its future is uncertain but the Rink will remain as is for the next few years.

The funding for staff and maintenance for these new facilities will come from increased fees and some will come from fundraising. Athletics has raised \$70 million in the campaign already, and some of the money is being raised for endowment to support long-term maintenance and projects. The increased fees are more acceptable if they are accompanied by programming, clinics, and visible maintenance. The committee discussed various possibilities such as charging fees to faculty and staff on a sliding scale according to salary, and reducing fees for graduate students. Steve Bilsky indicated that any changes in the fee structure would be made in conjunction with the constituent groups.

***Recommendation:***

- (1) The issue of different fee structure should be pursued both by the Committee and the management of athletics and recreational programs
- (2) Information regarding supporting student athletes should be provided to TAs during their annual TA training (offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Grad Center).
- (3) Regular meeting of the Athletic and Recreation directors with the Committee would be highly desirable.

## **Ethics**

The ethics subcommittee was charged with examining “how policies for ethical conduct of research, scholarship, and professional education are communicated to all students and how those policies are enforced.”

In carrying out our charge, we examined printed material on ethics policies; we examined the websites of all schools of the university; and we examined curricula of many schools and individual departments. We also interviewed Associate Provost for Education Andrew Binns and Director of the Office of Student Conduct Susan Herron.

***Is there a problem?***

According to the research of the Provost's office, plagiarism and unethical conduct in research and classes are not on the rise. A review of student evaluations, for example, indicates that cheating in classes has remained in the 3-5% range for the past several years.

If there is a perceived problem, it may be that new technologies have increased the rate of detection. Also, the Internet and mobile technologies have

broadened the possibilities for unethical behavior at every stage of teaching, research, and publication. And universities are adapting slowly. Only recently, for example, have university presses begun to purge metadata from files that might have surreptitiously revealed the identity of supposedly anonymous peer reviewers.

### ***Communicating Ethics at Penn:***

In general, the subcommittee was surprised by the difficulty it took to locate on-line the ethics policies of every school and even the university-wide Code of Ethics. On the other hand, we were impressed with the steps the university takes to communicate its policies to students and faculty. Some of these steps include:

- Ethics policies are discussed at freshman orientation
- Associate Provost Binns and Director Herron run town meetings in the college houses on topics such as “integrity”
- Courses on ethics have been included in the curricula of the Engineering, Business, Law, and Nursing Schools (and in some cases are required for accreditation)
- The Center for Teaching and Learning has taken on the task of aggregating university policies and assembling the material for students and faculty
- The library is incorporating plagiarism detection software into its Blackboard courseware program; the law school already uses an in-line based exam and term paper management system

Two areas that we did not investigate as fully as we would have liked are (1) the treatment of human subjects in experiments and (2) the use of plagiarism detection software. These areas might be taken up for further study in the future.

### ***Recommendations:***

Although the university is taking steps to improve its methods of communicating ethics policies, the subcommittee feels that there are ways that these methods could be bolstered or supplemented.

1) Websites that contain ethics policies of the university or its subdivisions need to be made more prominent, so that interested faculty and students can consult them.

2) Ethics policies vary from discipline to discipline. Individual departments and faculty members need to address the discipline specificity of ethics. Associate Provost Binns emphasized repeatedly that the faculty are the most important node for imparting ethical behavior and policies. The History Department has a useful handout. It would be valuable for every department to have a one-page handout covering their policies and code of ethical research that could be included with syllabi. In particular, the ethics of collaboration remains a grey area that varies greatly among disciplines. Ethics should also be covered more fully in the training of teaching assistants.

3) Finally, as methods of ethical misconduct among students proliferate as a result of mobile technology, it may become impossible for exam proctors to monitor behavior. To ensure ethical conduct and instill an ethical code beyond mere policing, Penn might consider adopting an honor code like Princeton or Haverford.

### **Suggested charges for the 2008-2009 Committee:**

- 1) Examination of the Global Engagement Initiatives of the University, with particular attentions to issues such central funding and coordination for these initiatives, funding for students to study abroad, need-blind

admissions for international students and adequacy of the current resources for these students.

- 2) Examination of Penn's use of educational Technology. Is Penn keeping up with its peer institutions in adoption of educational technology?
- 3) Continued reflections on policies for making the operation of the Committee more efficient and meaningful.