

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

Background

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 by section IV of the University's *Handbook for Faculty and Academic Administrators*.

2018-2019 Specific Charges

1. Assist and provide faculty consultation to the Chief Wellness Officer.
2. Examine the feasibility of integrating wellness initiatives into University curricula by developing best practices using examples from within Penn's schools.
3. Hold an open meeting for students to provide input (and continue to seek student input in other forms) on existing programs, CAPS and new wellness initiatives whenever possible.
4. Evaluate approaches and strategies for a pass/fail grading system in the first semester of freshman year.

Report & Recommendations

Since September 2015, SCSEP has studied the challenges and opportunities related to Penn's wellness initiatives and how they integrate into the University's core academic enterprise. We have met with administrators, clinicians, members of student government, and leaders from peer and advocacy groups. These included national organizations such as ActiveMinds, local groups like Penn Reflect, service providers under the supervision of VPUL and VPE, faculty from the Department of Psychiatry, and Chief Wellness Officer Dr. Benoit Dubé. The committee found all these stakeholders to be fully dedicated to serving individuals with mental illness and improving wellness across the University.

SCSEP's fact-finding process revealed progress has been made in advancing wellness efforts throughout the University, signified in part by the creation of the position of Chief Wellness Officer. As representatives of the standing faculty, SCSEP strongly endorses and will support the efforts of Dr. Dubé and his team. SCSEP also identified several opportunities for improvement across two areas: faculty involvement in enhancing student wellness, and the identification and critical review of academic policies and practices that have an impact on student wellness.

The following recommendations reflect these and other findings.

Admissions process: Building a culture of wellness begins even before a student arrives at Penn. The Office of Admissions communicate to high school counselors that Penn emphasizes both academic and emotional student preparedness. SCSEP recommends that an essay question be developed to ask applicants to reflect upon the concept of wellness and to describe a strategy for self-care if admitted to Penn.

Faculty-student interaction in the classroom: SCSEP recommends all faculty include verbiage in their syllabus related to wellness. CAPS provides an example:

Your wellness is important to me! College can be a tough time. If you are feeling distressed, please know that Penn provides many resources for caring and support. Counseling and Psychological Services (215-898-7021) and the HELP line (215-898-HELP) offer trained 24 hour services to all members of the Penn community. You can also talk to me. Though I cannot provide therapy to you, I'm happy to be available for support, consultation and guidance.

Another example is offered by Professor James Pawelski in his syllabus for The Pursuit of Happiness course:

Important Note: This is a course on happiness. Given the challenges of college life, we understand that you may well be experiencing levels of unhappiness beyond what this course can address. If you are feeling distressed, please know that Penn provides many resources for care and support. Counseling and Psychological Services (215-898-7021) and the HELP line (215-898-HELP) offer all members of the Penn community 24-hour access to trained personnel. You can also talk to your instructor and TAs. Although we cannot provide therapy to you, we're happy to be available for support, consultation, and guidance.

Likewise faculty members should be encouraged to include a brief introductory discussion about themselves and to describe to students their own strategies for maintaining life balance. Self-disclosure, when appropriate, of one's own lived experiences with mental illness offers a moment

for connection between students and professors, as an invitation to students to communicate about their own challenges, and possibly as another avenue for student support should they need it.

Faculty-student interaction in college housing: The impact of faculty-student interaction on student wellness is significant, especially with regard to faculty who live in student housing. College houses each customize their own surveys, though it is possible that College Housing and Academic Services (CHAS) might be able to provide a summary of findings from a recent set of surveys. SCSEP members expressed interest in reviewing survey instruments in order to recommend improvements for how wellness-related questions are addressed. They also proposed the creation of a rubric of strategies for assisting students with self-care for use by college houses.

Exam scheduling: We recognize that students may experience stress and distress around mid-term exam periods. In consideration of students who typically take two or more courses within a particular department concurrently, efforts should be made within departments to stagger mid-term exam days.

Major choice and career trajectory: SCSEP members fully recognize that the ultimate aim of many Penn students is to launch successful careers in their fields of choice. However, this aim sometimes supersedes the broader University goal of providing students with a well-rounded education. Student interest in liberal arts education has declined, despite recent trends indicating employers value individuals with both technical skills and knowledge in the arts and humanities. SCSEP reviewed research on the linkage between college majors, earnings, and job satisfaction. Most of the current research in this area has focused on the linkage of majors to lifetime income. Stanford economist Caroline Hoxby examined the records of 230,000 students and alumni.¹ She found that the highest earnings are in engineering, mathematics, and IT; the lowest are in childhood education, theology, social work, and the arts. John Robst, research associate professor at the University of South Florida, using a national database, concluded that (1) students majoring in the liberal arts have a higher probability of changing occupations, but the ability to change is much easier, and there are no negative effects on income; and (2) for those who majored in a specific skill but then did not work in that specific area, the negative effects on income were substantial.² SCSEP encourages the initiation of a study involving Penn students and alumni aimed at understanding the relationship between majors with lifetime job satisfaction, limited to Penn graduates. The Mellon Foundation appears very interested in the issue of a perceived decline in liberal arts education and could be a potential funder for such a study.

Clubs: SCSEP recommends that the student club entry system continue to be reformed. Certain aspects of club entry and the "auditions" process amount to hazing. SCSEP noted the need for wellness programming to address problems related to a culture of "toxic competitiveness" amongst students. SCSEP endorses the Undergraduate Assembly's and the Student Activities Council's resolution outlining seven guidelines that student clubs should follow when recruiting students. <https://sacfunded.net/policies/club-recruitment-policies>

"Less is More": SCSEP recommends developing communication strategies to students that emphasize deep engagement in a few select activities while discouraging over-commitment to many. We recognize the energy and passion students bring to Penn but wish to instill in students a sense of self-awareness and recognition of reasonable limits to prevent over-commitment, which may lead to stress, distress, and physical and mental health issues.

Wellness courses: SCSEP recommends the integration of wellness-based activities, assignments, and other curricular components in courses across the University. We encourage the development of a roster of courses that are designated as having a wellness component that might eventually become components to a minor or concentration. Courses might include those that provide students an opportunity to write about the role of arts in their wellness and a deeper understanding of the biological bases of stress, depression, and other behavioral health challenges. SCSEP recom-

¹ Article in press

² Robst, J., & VanGilder, J. (2016). Salary and job satisfaction among economics and business graduates: The effect of match between degree field and job. *International Review of Economics Education*, 21, 30-40.

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mends the consideration of accrediting physical education courses.

(Mis)use of stimulant medications by Penn students: Students who have mental health conditions may divert their medications to other students who do not. Common examples include the diversion of methylphenidate (Ritalin) and Adderall. SCSEP recommends a multi-media, multi-platform communication initiative that aims to teach students that these medications are not cognitive enhancers, that there are significant risks in the misuse of these medications, and that “sharing” medications with peers is dangerous.

Recommendations to 2019-2020 SCSEP

1. Examine the effects of social media use on Penn student wellness.
2. Study the effect of student choice of majors and activities on wellness by identifying case studies that illustrate the relationship between balanced student schedules and successful career trajectories.
3. Review the student experience survey instruments used by College Houses and Academic Services and recommend improvements for how wellness-related questions are addressed.

4. Reach out to faculty who have not received iCare training to encourage their participation.

5. Continue to assist and provide faculty consultation to the Chief Wellness Officer.

SCSEP Membership 2018-2019

Sunday Akintoye, Dental School
Lisa Lewis, Nursing
Ty Muhly, PSOM/Anesthesiology & Critical Care
Carol Muller, SAS/Music
Ralph Rosen, SAS/Classical Studies
Jorge Santiago-Aviles, SEAS/ESE
Dominic Sisti, PSOM/Medical Ethics & Health Policy, Chair

Ex Officio members:

Steven Kimbrough, Wharton, Faculty Senate Chair-Elect
Jennifer Pinto-Martin, Nursing, Faculty Senate Chair
Anita Summers, Wharton, PASEF non-voting member

Report of the Senate Committee on the Faculty and the Administration (SCOA)

General Committee Charge

The Committee on Faculty and the Administration: The Committee oversees and advises the Executive Committee on matters relating to the faculty's interface with the University's administration, including policies and procedures (e.g., the Patent Policy) relating to the University's structure, the conditions of faculty employment (such as personnel benefits), and information. In general the Committee deals with the matters covered by the following sections of the University's *Handbook for Faculty and Academic Administrators*: I.A.-D., I.G.-H.1., I.-K., II.E. III., V., VI. (henceforth referred to as the *Faculty Handbook*).

Specific Charges and Steps Taken to Address Them

SCOA's specific charges were to:

1. Systematically review existing and new modalities for online education at Penn, with particular focus on issues related to approval process, intellectual property, contracts, and incentives for faculty to develop and maintain such courses;
2. Assess the utilization of dependent tuition benefits and employer-provided retirement contributions by Standing Faculty members;
3. Examine the scope of programming and resources available to faculty members within the portfolio of the Chief Wellness Officer; and
4. Continue to review the distribution of University Research Foundation awards by research area.

SCOA expended the bulk of its efforts on point #1. Points #2 and #4 were not considered in depth, and point #3 was addressed directly by the Senate Committee on Students and Educational Policy.

1. Systematically review existing and new modalities for online education at Penn, with particular focus on issues related to approval process, intellectual property, contracts, and incentives for faculty to develop and maintain such courses.

In order to properly assess both the current state of affairs and to become better oriented with the relevant procedures and protocols, SCOA invited the following guests from Penn's Online Learning Initiative (OLI): Peter Decherney, faculty director; and Rebecca Stein, executive director. In addition, SCOA also invited Polk Wagner, professor of law, to orient SCOA on relevant IP issues. SCOA is grateful to its invited guests for their candid conversations and helpful information.

SCOA highlights the following findings:

1) Penn remains a leader in online education, and the demand for online course generation is rapidly increasing. This is evidenced by the recent creation of the Master of Computer and Information Technology (MCIT) in SEAS and the incipient Bachelor's of Applied Arts and Sciences (BAAS) in SAS/LPS, both of which are degree-granting programs.

Both these and other programs to come will require large numbers of high-quality courses to be built quickly and to Penn's standards of excellence. This is a very positive development, and Penn should continue to exercise leadership in this domain.

2) Since Penn's entrance into the online course market, incentives for Standing Faculty to engage in course development and maintenance have declined in several respects, as follows:

2A) Creation of an impactful online course is now more difficult than it was 5-7 years ago (competition has greatly increased, and with it, the amount of work required to build a quality product in a winner-take-all market), whereas novelty and publicity for doing so have declined. There is little social or professional reward for faculty investing time in course creation, and less for course maintenance.

2B) From the initial round of contracts for faculty-created massive open online courses (MOOCs) to the current, “standard” OLI “Open Online Course Development Agreement,” a shared faculty pool for profits has been intimated. However, to date, no such pool has been created and no accounting of costs and revenues has been provided. In addition, schools or centers hosting the most successful revenue-generating courses (e.g. Wharton) have renegotiated separate terms with Coursera and have isolated their revenue streams away from participation in any potential shared pool. This does not encourage faculty buy-in.

3) In addition, issues surrounding intellectual property (IP) when Standing Faculty create course content has been and remains unclear on a few points. The *Faculty Handbook* (Section III.D. Policy Relating to Copyrights and Commitment of Effort for Faculty) is clear that “creators of intellectual property own the copyright to works resulting from their research, teaching and writing.” While the use of University resources for filming of videos would appear to fall under the proviso that “Exceptions to this policy arise when the faculty create works that make substantial use of the services of University non-faculty employees or University resources”, the standard OLI Agreement states in Section 4.3 that:

Copyright Policy Does Not Apply. You agree that the University's “Policy Relating to Copyrights and Commitment of Effort for Faculty”, and any amendments or replacements in the future, (“Copyright Policy”) does not and will not apply to you in connection with the Course and this Agreement. You hereby waive application of the Copyright Policy to the Course and this Agreement.

This obscures rather than clarifies the situation, since the *Faculty Handbook* would appear to already account for exceptions based on ap-

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