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Student code changes proposed

By Carrie Dennett
 Emerald Associate Editor

Proposed amendments to the Student Conduct Code would change how academic dishonesty charges and minor infractions are resolved.

One amendment would give faculty and students a greater role in serious or contested cases of academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty cases are currently heard by one of five local attorneys who serve as hearing officers. Under the amendment, cases would be heard by three members of an Academic Dishonesty Hearing Board, including at least one student and one faculty member.

"I'm a believer of judgment by peers," said University Student Conduct Coordinator Elaine Green. "Academic dishonesty is something other students are concerned about."

At the same time, University faculty are expected to uphold guidelines of academic integrity, but have little role in enforcing those guidelines.

Green said faculty often do not trust the current system to do its job.

Because of this distrust, she said, some faculty will not use the student conduct system. Instead of reporting suspected dishonesty, they may take matters into their own hands by penalizing students through grades or other measures.

"It's important that faculty use the system to give students their due process," Green said.

However, Marlene Drescher, director of the Office of Student Advocacy, said there is a wide gap between the perception that the current system does not work, and the reality.

There are very few students who "get off scot-free," she said.

"The data show that when faculty do come forward with a report of academic dishonesty, the students are punished," Drescher said.

Faculty already play a major role in academic dishonesty cases, she said, because when a student is found guilty, the student's professor decides the punishment.

Drescher said academic dishonesty hearings need to remain in the hands of a trained attorney.

"These cases are like mini-trials," she said. "They create a record that can be forwarded to the court of appeals."

Officiating at an academic dishonesty hear-

ing requires a certain expertise, Drescher said, and the University could be put in an uncomfortable situation if students start appealing cases heard by an insufficiently trained board.

Also, using people from outside the University creates a perception of fairness that is vital to maintain the system's integrity, she said.

"It worries me when we start messing with due process and disciplinary hearings," Drescher said.

Green said the University is the only institution in the Oregon State System of Higher Education that uses an outside lawyer for dishonesty cases.

"I've had at least seven different lawyers look at the rules," she said, "and they said there is nothing in the administrative rules that says (the hearing officer) has to be someone with legal authority."

However, Drescher said there is an Oregon Administrative rule that distinctly says that the hearing officer must be a graduate of a law school. The student conduct code falls under the OARS.

The Hearing Board would be made up of five faculty and five students. The faculty would be appointed by the University president to serve staggered two year terms on the board. ASUO-recommended students would be appointed by the president to one-year terms.

A second amendment would allow an informal resolution of minor conduct infractions when a student fails to respond to a complaint issued by the Student Conduct Coordinator.

Currently, if a student fails to make an appointment with Green's office when requested, or makes an appointment but fails to show up, the student is automatically sent through the formal hearings process.

Green said this scenario only happens with a few students each year, but resolving the infractions through the formal process is a waste of time for both students and the hearings officer.

The third amendment would allow disciplinary action against any University student or student organization responsible for any fire hazard.

The current code states that the behavior must be a "significant" fire hazard.

The amendments will be discussed and voted on at the March 11 University Senate meeting, and both proponents and opponents are expected to testify.

ET ALS

MEETINGS

Pre-Law Society will meet tonight at 7:30 in EMU Cedar Room C.

Sister University Project will meet tonight at 5 in EMU Century Room E.

Incidental Fee Committee will meet tonight at 5:30 in the EMU Board Room to hear budgets for Pre-Health, Black Student Union, Literary Society, Pre-Law, Women

in Transition; and RIM.

The IFC will also meet Wednesday night at 6 in the EMU Board Room to hear budgets for Campus Information Exchange, MBA Association, Amnesty International, Chinese Student Association; and International Student Association.

Non-Traditional Student Coffee Hour will be Wednesday from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. outside the Women's Center.

Unwanted Sexual Behavior international issues meeting will be today at 3:30 p.m. in EMU Century Room A.

MISCELLANEOUS

Pacific Islands Studies lecture series will discuss "Nan Madol and Cultural and Historic Preservation Programs in the Pacific Islands" today at 4 p.m. in Room 119 Pacific.

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