

'Two Popes Boinking' spawns public debate

Forum held to discuss controversial art last Tuesday in Gregory Forum

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College President John Keyser emphasizes his support of student rights by suggesting that the complaint process be examined at a college-wide level.



Counselors David Blessman (left) and Ellen Wolfson listen as Faculty President Hugo Grimaldi (right) makes a point about academic freedom. The President's Council session became heated at times as administrators and faculty made impassioned points about student and faculty rights.



PHOTOS BY KARL KATZKE
Social Science Instructor Jackie Flowers answers a question about the modifications being proposed to the student complaint process.

Complaint process ignites campus debate

A faculty group proposes a change in the student Incident Resolution Form

KARL KATZKE
Business Manger

A group of College faculty has proposed a controversial change to the "Incident Resolution Form," which governs how complaints against faculty and staff of the college are handled.

According to Jackie Flowers, social sciences instructor, and Terry Mackey, two of the faculty members who are leading the group that has drafted a revised process, the revision was prompted by the complaint filed by Joshua Alexander against Dr. Don Epstein.

"My concern is that we don't have another incident like we had with Don Epstein, where the student complaint could have escalated to a level that wasn't appropriate for that particular complaint, since that complaint didn't deal with free expression in the classroom," said Flowers.

Another involved faculty member contended that the college could have future problems if this process is not modified.

"We're at an age," noted Mackey, "where formal litigation is the process, and I think some departments are going to need to protect themselves."

Proposed revisions

The proposed revision to the form, which could be retitled as the "Student Rights Violation and Resolution Form," adds a paragraph that reads: "Problems outside the purview of 'student rights' should be discussed with your instructor.

Examples of such problems include, but are not limited to: use of offensive language; ideological and/or religious conflicts; controversial topics."

Dissent exists in faculty

Several faculty members who were not involved with writing the draft were present at a meeting Monday evening, and many of them disagreed with the point of view of the revision.

"The decision-making process in the college for broad issues such as student complaints that involve all of us ... is a college issue that is brought up at President's Council," said Jan Godfrey, associate dean.

Godfrey made the point that only faculty members and members of *The Print* staff were attending a meeting that had implications for the entire campus.

Council meeting heated

At Tuesday morning's heated President's Council meeting, the revision was discussed with the college administration, and the reaction from other members of the college community was overwhelmingly against restricting student rights.

"I almost get the impression that we need to take student rights away to protect faculty rights," said John

Keyser, college president.

Flowers disagreed.

"It seems that when we talk about student rights and academic freedom, that oftentimes, we assume that there's going to be a clash between the two... but I don't think that's true," said Flowers.

Flowers advocates separating the present "Incident Resolution Form" into two processes: First, the revised "Student Rights Violation and Resolution" form, which outlines the student rights listed on pages 78-79 of the Student Handbook; and second, an as-yet-undeveloped process for a complaint against the course material or content of a class. She claims to simply be interested in clarifying the form

and its intent, rather than actually changing the rights of students.

"We were just going to clarify what was already there... we weren't intending to expand or contract anything," said Flowers.

Few people involved

College staff and faculty who disagree with the proposal cite the fact that a very small number of faculty members were involved in developing the revision.

"What I've seen so far is that it's not inclusive, people have moved too quickly, and have forgotten to

use the expertise that we've got on campus from the last time we did this nine years ago," said Ellen Wolfson of the counseling department. "I don't support the draft that's being passed around at all."

Norm Berney, associated student government advisor, shared these opinions.

"My concern, and my concern all along when I saw this issue come up, is that there hadn't been any student involvement," said Berney.

College to take a closer look

At the President's Council meeting, a decision was made for Dian Connett, dean of instructional services, to form a committee or task force that would include representatives from all of the necessary departments on campus.

"I'm going to meet with all of the association presidents," said Connett. "What's really important, is to see if we can lay out what is the current process and not only how does it operate, but what do we think its intent is. I don't think that was clear today... it seemed like we were jumping to solutions or suggestions or implications of things. Let's look at what we were trying to accomplish, and let's all look at how it should work."

Keyser supports the decision to take a closer look at this issue.

"I think it's a good place to initiate the discussion... In terms of the final recommendation, I think that we need multiple points of view... I think we're going to have some good discussion," said Keyser.

My concern all along when I saw this issue come up is that there hadn't been any student involvement.

Norm Berney
ASG Advisor

Student Rights

- The Incident Resolution Form is used when a student has a complaint or problem with a member of the college staff. The member of the college staff can be either a faculty member (a teacher), or a member of the support staff.

- Currently, the form reads: "Use this form if you have a problem with a member of the college staff that you would like help solving, specifically if you feel that your rights, as outlined in the Student Handbook, have been violated. The college will try to resolve the problem informally, but you may initiate a formal complaint if you are not satisfied with the outcome."

Your student rights are listed in the student handbook.

What's the controversy

- The following changes have been proposed to the Incident Resolution Form: "Problems outside the purview of 'student rights' should be discussed with your instructor. Examples of such problems include, but are not limited to: use of offensive language; ideological and/or religious conflicts; controversial topics."