CARA Report, April 2011

2010-11 Specific Charges and Related Meetings

1. Meet jointly (or as a subcommittee) with the Senate Committee on Students and the Educational Policy (SCSEP) to address admissions issues.
   – A subcommittee of CARA faculty met jointly with SCSEP and Eric Furda, Dean of Admissions, Oct 25, Dec 20.
   While the committee may wish to do a broad review of more than one of the following areas, it will want to choose only one as a focus area for this year:

2. Undertake an overview review of athletics, including adequacy of the balance of facilities for intercollegiate, intramural and recreational use; any issues concerning the tension between intercollegiate athletics and formal educational pursuits; any issues around Title 9 and recent legal decisions; and the fee structure for membership at Penn’s fitness facilities.
   – Mike Diorka, Associate Director of Recreation and Athletics – January 24

3. Undertake a review of Library services, including issues related to the balance among funds allocated to purchase of books, journals, newspapers, and (other) electronic resources in the context of changing patterns of user demands.
   - Carton Rogers, Vice Provost & Director of Libraries – December 13

4. Examine the role of the Office of Student Conduct and the resolution of cases concerning potential violations of academic conduct rules.
   – Susan Herron, Director of the Office of Student Conduct – February 14

5. Review plans and initiatives for increasing opportunities for undergraduate research.
   – Harriet Joseph (Director, Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships) and Wallace Genser (Associate Director, CURF) - November 8

Committee Membership

Faculty:
   Kathleen Boesze-Battaglia - Dental
   Nancy Hanrahan - Nursing
   Paula Henthorn - VET
   Leszek Kubin – VET
   Jon Merz – Medicine/ Medical Ethics
   Paul Shaman – Wharton
   Michael Topp – SAS/ Chemistry, Chair
   John Vohs – SEAS/ CBE

Graduate Students:
   Michael Kelly-Sell - Medicine
   Maria Murray – SEAS; GAPSA

Staff:
   Laura Foltman - GSE
   Jon Shaw – Library
   Suzanne Oh - GSE
   Peter Rockett - SEAS

Administrative Liaisons:
   Karen Lawrence – Provost/ Associate Director for Education
   Leo Charney – Provost/ Executive Director
**CURF - Recommendations**

1. We recommend a systematic improvement in tracking and recognizing undergraduates who are involved in research activities. CURF plays an important role in stimulating undergraduate interest in research. Yet, few statistics are apparently retained about the outcomes of student searches. For example, the PURM program stimulated nearly 500 applicants in 2010 for 45 slots, but whether the 450+ unsuccessful applicants found alternative positions on campus does not appear to have been recorded. This statistic, which covers a fraction of the undergraduates apparently involved in research, seems to reflect that there is no central tracking of either the numbers or the type of research activity in which students are engaged. Much information of this type must already be available from many academic departments, such as through course registration or payroll accounting, or from the Student Employment Office. Also, it seems that polling students and faculty directly could be productive, in particular providing a means to count those, such as research-active volunteers, who may otherwise be missed. Finally the question arose as to whether student participation in research activity, a likely highlight of their experience at Penn, could be more effectively documented as part of the Official Record.

2. Several different responsibility centers in this Committee’s purview emphasized the importance of academic integrity training (i.e., CURF, Library, OSC). Although such training is Federally mandated for many researchers and consequently for many graduate and undergraduate students involved in research, actual statistics on the existence of an academic integrity “problem” on the Penn campus are hard to come by. We recommend that the Committee address this issue in the coming year, both to avoid the redundancy due to overlapping areas of responsibility and to ensure that all students, faculty and staff are appropriately covered.

**Library - Recommendations**

1. We recommend supporting Open Access publishing to a greater degree to help counter the problem of costly subscriptions to “bundled journals”.

2. We recommend a review of the relationship between the Library budget and projected academic and other growth areas (e.g., new Professorships, research centers, organizations, departments and other programs). Each expansion and new initiative potentially places additional strains on the Library budget.

3. Regarding the use of course-support software, it appears that Blackboard is adequate. For those who wish to use it as a simple repository of information, it seems effective, but there is a consensus that the yearly updates cause an unnecessary irritation to the average user. We understand that there are several alternatives to Blackboard under consideration, including an upgraded version of Blackboard itself and some open source options. No matter how the support program evolves, it would be appreciated if more effective training were available so that users could obtain the maximum advantage from the program (e.g., on-line grading, interactivity). We certainly recommend a review of this system, taking into account projected user needs.
Athletics and Recreation - Recommendations

1. The Athletics and Recreation administration is concerned that women's teams commonly lose players beyond their second year. We recommend that the underlying causes be examined, in order to encourage increased participation among juniors and seniors. Considering the various constraints on the Athletics budget, it seems appropriate also to review the relative participation in the different programs.

2. We also recommend that Recreation and Athletics make every effort to adjust the fee structure and facility availability to encourage the involvement of personnel other than undergraduates, most of whom are on campus twelve months of the year.

3. The Committee supports the recommendation from Recreation and Athletics to extend Penn Transit service to Penn Park, particularly after normal business hours. However, the Committee also recommends that this request be combined with a review of the overall effectiveness of Penn Transit in servicing Center City after hours, which is of particular concern to Graduate and Professional Students.

OSC - Recommendations

1. We recommend a review of academic integrity training practices across the campus, with a view to developing a more uniform system. We recommend particular attention to TA training programs, including the Summer Orientation Program for International TA's, currently administered by the Office of International Programs, considering that Teaching Assistants are responsible for demonstrating good practices to undergraduates. Close coordination with the OSC and Federal guidelines would seem appropriate.

General Recommendations for CARA Committee 2011-12

The Committee suggests for next year that the two recommendations that emerged from CURF form the basis of the Committee agenda: (1) Documentation of undergraduate research activity, and (2) Assessment of academic integrity issues. The second item was also expressed as a concern in discussions with both the Library and OSC.
Supplement – background to recommendations

CURF
The Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships (CURF) was established in the fall of 2001 to provide advice and support to Penn students who were interested in Rhodes, Marshall Gates and Fulbright scholarships. The CURF website advertises the following services:

Fellowships, Scholarships and other funding for graduate study (primarily abroad); Research grants and funding for summer projects, as well as assistance in starting research; Sources of funding for housing, travel and miscellaneous expenses related to presenting research. In addition, CURF administers two sponsored programs, for University Scholars and Benjamin Franklin Scholars.

CURF helps Penn undergraduates pursue independent research through personal consultations and administration of competitive research grants. Their website advertises that CURF helps Penn undergraduates become involved in research by helping them to identify resources, to narrow searches, and to shape initial inquiries to find appropriate faculty mentors and research funding. CURF maintains a research directory, where Penn faculty and researchers have posted projects applicable to undergraduates. Major grants and fellowships, mostly to fund the costs of postgraduate study, are administered by CURF. Many of these programs are available in the UK and elsewhere.

The PURM (Penn Undergraduate Research Mentoring) program, currently in its fifth year, provides financial support in the summer to pairs of rising sophomores and juniors with faculty members, as an entry to research. Some 27 additional students function as Research Peer Advisors, who assist with outreach events. Excluding University Scholars and Benjamin Franklin Scholars, the amount of funding for PURM program research has increased about 4 times since its inception in 2005 (currently >$200 k) and the number of students has roughly doubled, to 128 (2010). Through increased advertising, a series of research proseminars, and also “through word of mouth”, the PURM program stimulated a three-fold increase in the number of applicants between 2009-2010, to nearly 500 applicants for the available 45 slots (limited by funding). The CURF director described the selection procedure as “based on types of research, schools represented, sex, race etc.”, with an aim to produce “the most diverse population” of awardees. On the other hand, CURF did not apparently track the 450 unsuccessful applicants to the PURM program in 2010, who may or may not have found research positions elsewhere on campus.

In addition to the many students who apparently preview advertised research opportunities via CURF, a large number of undergraduates make contact with faculty mentors separately (such as through course work or academic advising). Much undergraduate research is supported through faculty, or research-center generated funds, and a significant number of students also work as volunteers in settings that offer them solid opportunities to participate in the research process. It is indeed likely that the number of students supported by well defined scholarships or formally enrolled in independent study projects represents only a fraction of the total number of students involved in research activities. Although, in principle, undergraduate students involved in research should be easy to track – most are either obtaining credit or being paid - the exact numbers do not appear to be centrally tabulated. For many students, there is no official Penn record of their involvement in research activities.
As a part of their undergraduate research efforts, CURF is improving undergraduates’ knowledge of responsible research conduct by connecting students and faculty and by helping departments run “research experience applications”. CURF has also established a faculty advisory board on undergraduate research, provides some support for proposal writing and has developed a program for Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) training for undergraduates. In this last respect, it is not clear to what extent the “RCR” training complements Federally mandated academic integrity training in many departments.

Library

The Library is implementing a complex multi-year strategic plan, which is summarized in the Ivy Leaves document. The components are:

1. Excellence in Learning Management and Research Support
   Priority: Enrich teaching, learning, research, and professional practice through scalable, reliable, cost-efficient technologies and high-quality research and instructional services.
   Promote excellence in learning and user training (e.g., technological proficiency in GIS, bibliometrics, media visualization, course ware products).

2. High-Quality Collections and Content
   Priority: Optimize the Libraries’ ability to meet the demand for information resources required by teaching, research and professional practice.

3. Design of Effective Learning Environments
   Priority: Create physical and virtual learning environments that promote the integration of knowledge, advancement of learning, and the exploration of new media and innovative teaching and learning methods.

4. Expertise in Knowledge Management Services
   Priority: Enhance support for the scholarly creation and use of knowledge in all of its forms and expressions; provide for the efficient and effective flow, discovery, sharing, publication, and preservation of data and scholarship.

The Penn Library serves a large research community across 12 schools. The Library has played a major role in the design of an effective learning environment, through the Weigle Information Commons. The implementation of other effective learning environments (physical and virtual spaces) is a current priority, as is the upgrade of existing facilities, especially in the Engineering and the Biomedical areas.

Acquisition of print materials remains very important, in addition to the vast expansion of e-resources. Costs are increasing rapidly while the Library budget, 86% of which comes from University allocations, has declined relative to tuition. Constraints on professional salaries for Library personnel are also an expressed concern.

Research funding and library expenses are intimately linked. Penn has one of the highest research expenditures in the country, including both total and federally sponsored research. For
example, the *Ivy Leaves* document quotes 2007 figures showing Penn's total research expenditures to be second only to Duke University, and Federal, third behind Columbia and Duke. This high standing correlates well with the high ranking of the number of doctorates awarded (2009; third behind Columbia and Cornell) and postdoctoral appointees (2007; second behind Yale). Despite increases in overall spending at the highest-ranking Universities, the proportion of Library spending has declined steadily in the last two decades.

Erosion of purchasing power is a major concern for the library. Although there has been a steady reduction of print journal costs due to the transition to digital media, there has been a steady inflation of publisher costs. For example, the Journal Nature has mushroomed in size and expense in recent years. Whereas in 2000, there were 11 titles, in 2010, there were 36. The expenditure on Nature has increased by a factor of more than 20 in the decade since 2000, reflecting also a large increase in the price of the publication. Some other examples of major expenses include $4.5 M for access to 6300 journal titles, of which more than 70% of the outlay went to just three publishers supplying 1700 journal titles. Some $2.9 M went for 475 databases. Another measure of inflation is that, despite a near doubling of the expenditures on serials at Penn in the last decade, the purchasing power, based on average per-title cost of ISI titles, has declined on the order of 10%.

Some concerns were expressed in the Committee about the existing course support system, which, for much of the campus, is represented by Blackboard. (Webcafe has been used at Wharton for some time, and will soon be replaced, possibly by Blackboard 9 or Canvas). The Blackboard resource is constantly being updated, although a general consensus seems to be that the frequent updates are more of an inconvenience for many users. It was also felt that Blackboard is inflexible, the interface is difficult to use for some purposes, and that the support for visual media needs improvement. It appears that, while Blackboard is indeed functional and relatively widely used, a good case can be made to consider replacing the system with an Open Source equivalent, such as Sakai or Moodle. No matter how the support program evolves, it would be appreciated if more effective training were available so that users could obtain the maximum advantage from the program (e.g., on-line grading, interactivity).

**Athletics and Recreation**

A major development in the area of Athletics and Recreation, scheduled to open later in 2011, is the new $46 million Penn Park project, a 24-acre development located on the old “Postal” property south of Walnut street and east of Franklin Field. One aim of this multi-use area is to expand athletic fields that could be utilized not only for intercollegiate sports, but for intramurals and other club sport programs. There are 39 club sport programs, 12 of which are field sports, involving more than 1200 participants. In addition to the athletics areas, there will be parking space for 300 vehicles. The area will feature both outdoor and indoor recreation areas, including a seasonal “bubble” structure, and is designed to run all year. It is planned to construct a softball stadium that will also serve as an amphitheater to accommodate performances. Provision is also made for sand volleyball courts and twelve new tennis courts with seating.

This area will substantially increase the effective “green” space of the campus in addition to providing a major expansion of the Athletics and Recreation facilities.

Coupled with this development, some existing buildings are being upgraded. For example, there has been a major update of the Weiss Pavilion. The intercollegiate weight room, some 20,000 square feet, is now located on the lower portion of the facility. On the east end of the facility toward the train tracks is the Fox Fitness Center (8000 square feet). This has state-of-the-art equipment to
complement the Pottruck facility, and will be dedicated to recreational use. There will also be a retail center including food service. The tennis courts will be moved to the new space, and the existing space in front of the Palestra will be converted to “green space” (i.e., garden-like environment).

It is intended to integrate the new green area into the campus, by providing facilities for informal recreation and pedestrian transit, such as from Center City. Given the contemplated late hours of operation, it is also intended to expand the coverage of Penn Transit to accommodate facility users. Optimally, this priority would be integrated with an expansion of Penn Transit to cover Center City more effectively.

Title IX compliance remains a concern. Although the campus student population is almost evenly balanced between men and women, there is the concern of limited female participation in many sports. There is evidence that both genders tend to reduce their activity in competitive sports after the sophomore year, although the statistics for women seem to be of greater concern. One important issue is the definition of “participation”, which depends on rules established by the NCAA, essentially involving qualifying for, and representing NCAA-competitive teams. The “unintended consequence” of Title IX is generally accepted to be that, because of the large size of the football program, many other men's sports tend to be underfunded, if not actually dependent on the corresponding women's teams. So, whereas a loss of female participation directly affects those particular women's sports, it can also have significant consequences for a wide range of men's sports other than football. An article recently posted at Philly.com documents the near demise of men's wrestling at the Division I level.

The natural focus of Title IX complaints is (men's) football, which at Penn carries 120 players and, like many Ivy League teams, is not a major income generator. Only half of the “participants” (i.e., 65 players) can travel with the team, and it is an ongoing debate as to how many actual “participants” there are in the program. Penn has a Compliance Officer and an assistant who monitor effective participation of both males and females and the certification of individual players in all sports. Also factored into the financial equation are the locker rooms, travel expenses and salaries of sports-related personnel.

The annual NCAA re-certification is to some extent factored into the Admissions policy, given the attrition beyond the second year in women's sports.

Another current issue concerns the accessibility and affordability of the Athletics and Recreation facilities, including formal classes, to non-undergraduate users. There has been some recent progress in the form of some fee adjustments, although this issue is still under review by the University.

OSC

The Office of Student Conduct (OSC) is responsible for acting on behalf of the University in matters of student discipline. OSC deals with alleged instances of academic dishonesty and other student misconduct, in order to determine how best to resolve these allegations consistent with the goals and mission of the University as an educational and intellectual community. The student disciplinary system has jurisdiction over all four of Penn's undergraduate schools and many graduate programs. The primary regulations enforced are the Code of Student Conduct and the Code of Academic Integrity. However, the Office of Student Conduct also has responsibility for complaints arising under the policies governing computing use, open expression, sexual misconduct, alcohol and drug use, fraternity and sorority behavior and others. Among the staff of the OSC are two Associate Directors, two part-time Associate Directors and an Assistant Director.

1 http://articles.philly.com/2011-03-08/sports/28668895_1_college-program-dan-gable-iowa-state
The OSC states that: “The University expects all students to adhere to a high standard of responsible behavior. It also seeks to achieve a fair and constructive resolution to disputes which arise when those high standards are allegedly breached. In keeping with these goals, the Charter of the Student Disciplinary System places great emphasis on mediation (excluding matters of academic integrity), and the Office of Student Conduct will encourage mediation whenever practical and appropriate. In any event, all disputes brought to the OSC will be handled in a manner consistent with the underlying purposes of the disciplinary process.”

Some concerns of the OSC include variability in enforcement of rules for academic integrity, particularly plagiarism, across the University community. For example, the OSC identified some of the variables to be faculty-student interactions (different tolerances and remedies are applied across campus, commonly not involving OSC), the academic level of the student and pressures from nonacademic programs. Academic integrity issues are of sufficient priority for the OSC that they distribute “DO IT YOURSELF” post-it notes displaying the following advice: “Your work is valuable: Don’t sell yourself short by using someone else’s. Speak for yourself: Why allow someone else to speak for you?” The Notes contain the URL: www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity. The OSC organizes workshops to appraise students of their responsibilities, and also presents academic integrity seminars for PhD and Masters students.

Federal guidelines for academic integrity training for research personnel are strict, and greater efforts are evidently needed to reach all members of the University community. A complication encountered by the Committee was that there do not appear to be reliable statistics on the extent of an academic integrity "problem" on campus (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, …). Nonetheless, the development of increasingly sophisticated information retrieval methods has prompted several responsibility centers on campus to anticipate the need for increased vigilance and training. TA training programs are considered to be a particularly important component of both teaching and enforcing academic integrity standards across the campus.