Committee on Academic and Related Affairs (CARA)
Final Report for 2011 – 2012
April 11, 2012

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Executive Summary:
CARA met monthly during the past academic year and focused its attention on two items. First, it examined the matter of academic integrity at Penn. This is where the Committee spent the majority of its time and met with a number of students, staff, faculty and administrators from across Penn’s campus as well as having conversations with other individuals at other universities and colleges. The result of these discussions include the following:

1. Academic integrity is an important topic to both faculty and students and procedures and policies to reinforce academic integrity at Penn are important and must be balanced with their effects on the academic lives of both students and faculty;
2. Academic integrity is a shared responsibility between faculty and students – both have a stake in its outcome;
3. After extensive consultation, the committee developed a set of best practices that can be used by faculty to help further facilitate academic integrity at Penn;
4. There is more to do in this area and we suggest that next year’s committee continue discussion and work on academic integrity.

Second, CARA started its consideration of undergraduate research. The results of this more limited discussion included the following:

1. Undergraduate research is a key differentiator for Penn and is aligned with its values and core strengths; there is enthusiasm among students, staff, faculty and administrators for providing this rich learning experience to all undergraduates who want to participate;
2. Ways to enhance and increase participation of undergraduates is an important part of the mission of the four undergraduate schools and each is pursuing its own strategy for implementing this with their students;
3. This is a topic that requires further discussion and is an ideal topic for CARA next year, especially given the self-study that occurs prior to Middle States Accreditation.

Background and Charge to Committee:
The committee has a very broad charge that covers a considerable portion of the University. For this year, the more specific charge is given below.

Specific Charges for 2011-2012
1. The University puts a high priority on research experience for undergraduates. However the beginning review that CARA undertook last year suggested that there are many unknowns about these
opportunities, how many opportunities are available (both through formal programs, like PURM, and through informal mechanisms.) Be sure to include research settings outside the four undergraduate schools. Are there students who want such experience but cannot find appropriate opportunities? Is there a need to encourage more students to become involved in research? Is there a need for more research opportunities to be offered? Have research experiences been productive for students given what is expected from them by the students themselves, by faculty sponsors, and by administrators? Develop recommendations about possible policy changes or program procedure changes, if needed.

2. Review the state of academic integrity procedures at Penn. There are issues of academic integrity associated with classroom performance (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) and issues associated with research (e.g. human subjects procedures, responsible conduct of research.) The review of academic integrity may include examination of current approaches to educating students and instructors (including TAs) about principles and rules, as well as procedures for reporting and for adjudicating possible integrity violations. It may be useful to consider both the official framework and actual current practices and experience with regard to academic integrity procedures. Close coordination with the Office of Student Conduct and of the office charged with human subjects training (Institutional Review Board) may be helpful in this process. Develop recommendations if appropriate.

3. 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 2012-2013.

CARA members thought the charge of the Committee is indeed very broad, perhaps too broad, and appreciated the more-focused specific charges above. They used the guidelines above to move forward with the two topics of interest for 2011 – 2012; namely, academic integrity and undergraduate research.

General Operating Procedures:

The Committee decided rather quickly in the first meeting to focus on academic integrity and undergraduate research. Using advice from all Committee members and the liaisons and staff, CARA invited a number of representatives (e.g., undergraduates and graduate students, staff from across campus, key campus administrators and faculty) to meet with the Committee at their monthly meetings. This was enormously useful and provided not only information on procedures and diverse viewpoints, but also helped shape our thinking and recommendations on these two matters.

The Committee met monthly during the academic year 2011–2012. With the exception of the first and last meetings, the committee had representatives from outside the Committee at each meeting. No sub-committees were formed.

A liaison, Joan Gluch, Associate Dean for Academic Policies, Penn Dental School, and member, Council Steering Committee, joined our committee for several of its meetings because the Dental School is also considering this topic.
Representatives Meeting with CARA:

The following people came to a CARA meeting and they provided useful context and specific information as well as answering questions and participating in discussions. We are enormously appreciative of their time and significant contributions to this report.

Academic Integrity:
Andy Binns (Vice Provost for Education)
Faye Cheng (Undergraduate Assembly, UA)
Dennis DeTurck (Dean of the College)
Susan Herron (Director of the Office of Student Conduct, OSC)
Joan Gluch, Associate Dean for Academic Policies, Penn Dental School
Barbara Mann Wall (Associate Professor, School of Nursing)
Georgette Philips (Vice Dean, Wharton Undergraduate Division)
Aaron Roth (Honor Council)
Christina Sorice (Student Committee on Undergraduate Education, SCUE)
Catherine Turner (Senior Associate Director Center for Teaching & Learning)
Santosh Venkatesh (Associate Professor, Penn Engineering)

Undergraduate Research:
Martin Asher (Director, Research and Scholars Programs, Wharton)
Andy Binns (Vice Provost for Education)
Dennis DeTurck (Dean of the College)
Wallace Genser (Associate Director of Undergraduate Research, CURF)
Joe Sun (Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, Penn Engineering)

CARA Discussion on Academic Integrity:
Our initial discussion on this topic started with Andy Binns, Vice Provost for Education, during our first meeting as a committee. He informed us of the work on academic integrity that was being done by the Council of Undergraduate Deans and also the federally mandated subject of Responsible Conduct in Research Training (RCR).¹

Andy also noted the work of Bruce Lenthall, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning who has done research on good teaching practices.²

Susan Herron, Director, OSC, provided a comprehensive background on OSC and how cases of suspected student misconduct are handled. OSC is responsible for acting on behalf of the University in matters of student discipline. Their job is to investigate complaints regarding possible violations of academic integrity, determine whether or

¹ NSF and NIH have mandated that any student or post-doc taking part in NSF/NIH funded research must undergo responsible conduct of research training.
² Bruce Lenthall has experience with providing alternative means of evaluating student performance; something that the Committee did not take up in great detail but a subject that has bearing on the topic of academic integrity and the use of preventative measures by the faculty.
not violations have occurred and, if so, determine appropriate sanctions. OSC has both an educational and a disciplinary role. The educational part is working with students so that they understand their behavior, understand what is wrong with it, take responsibility for it, and sign an agreement acknowledging their responsibility and agreeing to sanctions.

Faculty have the right to treat cheating on their own (e.g., through a lowering of a grade because the work is not worth the original grade due to some unfair advantage obtained by a student) but cannot impose sanctions. It was pointed out to the Committee that serial cheaters tend to slip through the system if faculty do not report infractions to OSC.\(^3\) There is often hesitancy on the part of faculty to become involved with OSC by reporting cases.

Typical cases that come to OSC involve plagiarism, requests for re-grading (where original material has been changed by the student) and improper collaboration during exams or in other work.

One of the challenges for students, staff, and faculty is the lack of consistent guidance, terminology and practice in the area of academic integrity. For example, what is improper collaboration for one instructor or one course is sometimes considered normal for another instructor or course. There is a great variation in practice across campus when it comes to collaboration on assignments done outside of class. For this reason, the particular issue of collaboration outside for the classroom seems to be a massive gray area for students and one that is often not discussed carefully by faculty for their particular courses.

Catherine Turner, Senior Associate Director of the Center for Teaching & Learning, provided an overview of the Center’s work with faculty and TAs. Standing faculty learn about academic integrity at Penn when they first arrive and also at some departmental meetings.

TAs from the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Design and the School of Nursing attend a two and one-half day training session that covers academic integrity. TAs are taught about methods to write exams and other assignments so that plagiarism is more difficult, ways to help their students navigate ambiguous areas, issues arising from collaboration among students, and methods to articulate appropriate academic integrity policies in their syllabi.

Members of CARA noted there is a perception that dealing with OSC is not always a faculty member’s preferred venue for dealing with issues of academic integrity. Two reasons were presented: (1) it is very time-consuming for faculty and that

\(^3\) It appears that some schools require faculty members to report such infractions. However, it is not known to what extent this occurs in practice.
disciplinary hearings can take an enormous amount of their time, including extending beyond the academic period of the course. Most faculty members have heard of some previous colleague who spent an inordinate amount of time because of bringing a case to OSC or its predecessor. However, it appears that only a very small percentage of cases brought to OSC ever go to a hearing. The vast majority of cases (well over 90%) are dealt with through an agreement between OSC and the student. (2) Faculty are often reluctant to engage OSC for concern of creating a permanent mark on a student’s record. It is also possible that faculty perceptions are not in alignment with present reality and more could be done both in terms of communication and in addressing these concerns.4,5

We note that academic integrity is a shared responsibility of both students and faculty. Students see cheating as undermining their own learning experience and would like to see it eliminated. Faculty also see cheating as undermining the learning experience but sometimes do not give enough attention to prevention. The Committee heard from many of the guests we met with that faculty need to take for stronger positions with regard to cheating and that the University needs to provide clearer guidelines to the faculty to help streamline the message to students. We recommend preventative measures be taken by faculty at the beginning of each course by having a discussion regarding academic integrity as it applies to the course, especially in the issue of collaboration outside of class. Additional preventative measures include the design of assignments and exams so that cheating is more difficult. Although most of our discussion was with regard to academic integrity and undergraduates, our graduate students also need education in this area. Some of this is accomplished through TA training but faculty advisors could also play a key role here when their graduate students first arrive on campus. The faculty perception of OSC and the facts of what procedures are typically involved in most of the cases is not consistent. There is an opportunity to increase the communication between faculty and OSC in order to better support the academic code of integrity. Finally, faculty and staff advisors should discuss this with incoming freshmen as part of their one-on-one orientation to first semester students.

We also recommend that students themselves get more involved in academic integrity. As one example, this could be done through the help of peer-advisors and RAs who are prepared to discuss this with incoming students early in the year.

4 We understand there is work in the College that is intended to address some of these issues and to improve the tracking of serial cheaters. In addition, we understand that the Schools and OCS are working on a document to enhance communications about the work of OSC.
5 One guest has pointed out that adjunct faculty and other non-standing faculty, in particular, may not have appropriate education in how to treat suspected violations of the academic code of integrity.
**Best Practices:**

Our work in this area is perhaps best summarized by a list of best practices, things that could be done to enhance academic integrity. These include:

1. **Reduce the opportunity for cheating.** The faculty has a responsibility to put in place appropriate measures to discourage academic dishonesty.
2. **Use appeals to morality and self-respect;** faculty can articulate these ideas explicitly in class.
3. **Discuss the code of academic integrity in detail.** This should be part of the faculty introduction to each course.
   a. The first lecture should clearly and seriously include this topic.
   b. Students suggested that penalties need not be Draconian but need to be smart.
4. **Faculty should note the specific guidelines for collaboration on homework,** because this is a gray area that appears to have many variations depending on the department and instructor and is sometimes very confusing to students.
5. **Faculty can use additional preventative measures:**
   a. Let students know what will happened to them if they do not abide by the code of academic integrity.
   b. Stay in the classroom during exams.
   c. Have enough TAs in the classroom monitoring exams.
   d. For some courses, use various versions of exams (not the same to each student); this is being used in some quantitative courses.
   e. Require students to place electronic devices at the front or back of the classroom during exams; not next to their desks.
6. **Use the statement of academic honesty** on the blue books and have it typed in other exams and homework (e.g., projects, comprehensive exams).
   a. This statement does not seem to be widely used but is thought to be effective by both faculty and students.
   b. Use it consistently and have it signed (e.g., at the beginning of each exam).
7. **Work on take-home exams in large classes** is notoriously challenging with regard to academic integrity – use sparingly or avoid.
8. **For group projects,** one strategy to encourage academic honesty is to have students estimate the percent effort or participation grade of other group members.

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6 The statement formulated last year follows. “My signature below certifies that I have complied with the University of Pennsylvania’s Code of Academic Integrity in completing this (examination)(paper)(problem set)(assignment).” This is followed by lines for name, signature and date.

7 One guest noted that a potential pitfall in having students provide a portion of a grade for other students in a group is that students in a competitive environment may mark down classmates or gang-up on a particular classmate in order to improve their own standing. We do not know how common these actions are.
9. Faculty can be specific, this helps (e.g., “I have turned in people before and I will turn them in again. Students violating the code of academic integrity will get a grade of F for the assignment or will be sent of the OSC.”). Students indicated that they wanted to be informed regarding violations of the academic code of integrity in a course (while recognizing the privacy of the student who is punished).

10. Find ways for students to become more involved. This could be as simple as having academic integrity be part of the items discussed by peer advisors and RAs.

Practices To Avoid:
Here are things that sometimes occur but should be avoided, if possible.
1. Failure to follow through – if a faculty member does not follow through when cheating happens then nothing positive occurs and a learning opportunity is lost. Students noted that it is not fair to students who are doing the right thing when students who are cheating are not penalized.

2. Giving a large percentage of the final grade from homework. This makes improper collaboration or the use of previous material more likely.

CARA Discussion on Undergraduate Research:
Undergraduate research is a key differentiator for Penn. The University, the Schools and individual faculty members have been increasingly active in linking interested undergraduates with laboratories, research groups and faculty. Our first discussion of this topic was initiated by our meeting with Andy Binns during our first session as a committee in October 2011. Andy noted that there is tremendous activity on campus in gathering data on undergraduate research in light of the self-study that occurs prior to Middle States accreditation. There has been a steady increase in documented undergraduates participation in research during the past several years.

Our discussion on undergraduate research continued with the meeting of February 2012. Here we heard descriptions from several undergraduate schools about formal and informal means to involve undergraduates in research that are summarized below. These examples are not exhaustive but provide a sense of the research opportunities across campus for Penn undergraduates. In addition to these programs, schools also have a variety of programs to involve underrepresented minorities in research.

Wallace Genser, Associate Director of Undergraduate Research at the Center for Undergraduate Research & Fellowships (CURF), noted that the Penn Undergraduate Research Mentoring (PURM) Program, created in 2007, provides a summer research assistantship to 50 or more undergraduates and links them to faculty researchers throughout the University using an application process. The College and CURF, which
was initiated some 10 years go, work to also provide research experiences to undergraduates. In addition, the Benjamin Franklin Scholars Program allows students to participate in seminars with faculty. Students can also participate in the Integrated Studies Program under Peter Struck that includes a year-long course on integrating knowledge on big issues. Factors that contribute to the success of these programs are funding for students, interesting research problems, opportunities to be involved with cutting-edge research, experiencing a sense of discovery and having the opportunity to work with caring faculty. Undergraduates work not only with faculty in the four undergraduate schools but also with faculty in the Perelman School of Medicine and the School of Veterinary Medicine.

Martin Asher, Director, Research and Scholars Programs, Wharton, noted that research is viewed simply as another aspect of student learning. The Wharton Summer Program for Undergraduate Research (SPUR) and the Wharton Social Impact Research Experience (SIRE) are initiatives that provide students with funding and connections to faculty researchers. There is also an informal program that links undergraduates to faculty and Ph.D. students over lunch.

In Penn Engineering, Joe Sun, Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, noted that all students are involved in research and design through a project that they work on in their senior year in small groups with the assistance of faculty from across campus. The Summer Undergraduate Research in Engineering (SURE) Program, the International Summer Undergraduate Research in Engineering (iSURE) Program and the Rachleff Scholars Program are all ways in which undergraduates can participate in research in Penn Engineering. In addition, the Vagelos Integrated Program in Energy Research (VIPER) enrolls undergraduates who are interested in energy science and engineering and provides them with a research experience.

It was clear to our committee that undergraduate research is enthusiastically supported by students, staff, faculty and the administration. Schools have found their own ways to tailor programs to their constituencies and that this linkage of undergraduates to mentors and research groups provides a powerful learning experience. The goal here should be to have research opportunities for any Penn undergraduate who is interested. It is advantageous to have this research formally documented. We also recommend that students be encouraged by their faculty mentors and advisors to seek out local and national meetings to present their work.

Conclusions:

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity at Penn is both a shared responsibility and a concern of students and faculty. A number of measures to encourage academic integrity have already been put in place but are not used consistently. There are a number of preventative measures that can be used and we encourage our faculty colleagues to note the best practices listed and to use them appropriately in their own teaching. One
of the keys to reaching the occasional cheater is to set the guidelines and tone early in each course and early in the student experience at Penn.

The only way to stop serial cheaters is to have a record of these individuals. This is difficult if faculty do not communicate incidents of academic code violation to OSC. There is an opportunity to increase the communication between OSC and the faculty so that they can provide mutual support. At the moment there appears to be little awareness on the part of faculty as to the details of what OSC does.

There are also a number of different policies among the schools and several schools are evaluating their own policies on academic integrity. The Office of the Provost is a place that could bring schools together to exchange ideas and perhaps to provide guidance on baseline concepts and expectations for faculty and students. ⁸

With respect to the next year, there is more that should be done with respect to coordination among the schools in the area of academic integrity; we encourage CARA to look at ways to enhance these interactions in order to avoid duplication of effort as individual schools further investigate academic integrity.

Undergraduate Research

Undergraduate research is an enormous positive for Penn in both recruiting and in the undergraduate learning experience. Schools have innovative and effective programs. We would like to see a research opportunity for each undergraduate who desires it. We sense that increased funding, in particular, is needed to make this a reality.

We have only begun the conversation across campus on undergraduate research and this seems to be an appropriate area for continued work by CARA. There is the challenge of finding increased funding to further support undergraduate research and travel, and there are also matters of student protection and potential conflicts of interest. With regard to future discussions on this subject, particularly with the August 2012 implementation of NIH conflict of interest regulations that apply to the entire university, there should be a additional consideration regarding faculty extramural activities (private consulting) and undergraduate research opportunities to ensure that university resources are not used in appropriately for extramural benefit. Neither of these two areas was investigated this year.

⁸ We understand that deans from the various schools are working on a document that may help in this respect.