

STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

1. Senate Matters: Composition and Membership

- I. The Steering Committee of the Academic Senate, in concert with the Committee on Committees, is in receipt of a report from the current faculty member in charge of the clickers, Dr. Thomas Gerson, detailing the way in which Senators have been appointed and clicker numbers assigned over the last academic year. Although this report has not been included in the Agenda of the Academic Senate, any senator who wishes to peruse it may request it at etai@qcc.cuny.edu.

2. Committee Matters: Composition and Membership

- I. The various actions outlined in the October report to the Senate tendered by Dr. Jannette Urciuoli, chair of the Committee on Committees, have now been taken:
 - Professor Lawrence Bentley has joined the Committee on Writing Across the Disciplines/Writing Across the Curriculum as a voting member;
 - Professor Todd Holden has joined the Committee on Course and Standing,
 - Professor Nidhi Gadura (Bio & Geology) has become the new Steering Committee Designee for the Committee on Writing Across the Disciplines/Writing Across the Curriculum
 - Professor Jung Cho has become Senate Steering Committee Designee to the Admissions committee
 - Professor Christine Manzo has become Senate Steering Committee Designee to the Awards and Scholarship Committee
 - Professor John Gordon will join the Committee on Course and Standing as new Steering Committee Designee.
 - Finally, Student Government, working with Ms. Gisela Rivera, has furnished Student representatives to most of the Standing Committees of the Academic Senate. These students have been reported as in attendance at meetings of the Committee on Curriculum; Environment, Quality of Life, and Disability Issues; Bylaws; and Ceremonial Occasions as of this writing.

Once again, we are grateful to Dr. Urciuoli, all the hard-working members of the Committee on Committees, members of Student government, and Ms. Gisela Rivera, for their valuable service. We also wish to thank the chairs of these committees who were diligent about acknowledging new members and welcoming Steering Committee Designees.

3. Committee Matters: Activities

- I. On October 22, 2008, members of the Committee on Bylaws met to evaluate the proposal made by President Marti, in anticipation of Queensborough's pending Middle States Reaccreditation Evaluation, that chairing of the Academic Senate should be shifted from the President of the College to the Chair of the Steering Committee. The Committee on Bylaws also considered proposals related to approval of the Agenda, and the rescheduling of meetings on Tuesdays scheduled with non-Tuesday classes. The Steering Committee furnished a variety of preparatory materials to the Committee to assist with its deliberations, as did the Faculty Executive Committee and Queensborough Administration. This month's Senate agenda includes a report of

this Committee's deliberations and conclusions, and Dr. Sarno will be attending the Senate meeting to answer questions and offer comments. The Steering Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Sarno and his fellow committee members, as well as members of the Faculty Executive Committee and Administration, for the time and trouble they have devoted to consideration of this weighty matter.

- II. The Chairs of the Committee on Curriculum and the Committee on Environment, Quality of Life, and Disability Issues, as well as Steering Committee Secretary Professor Devin McKay, were present at the first meeting of the Sustainability Campus Council, called by Vice-President Call on Tuesday, October 21, 2008. Over the coming months, this committee will be considering various ways to reduce Queensborough's collective "carbon footprint." As of this writing, the Steering Committee notes that Vice-President Call has reported a membership of 59 faculty, staff, and students. The Steering Committee also notes that Dr. Philip Pecorino, chair of the Curriculum Committee of Academic Senate, is co-chairing, with Dean Paul Marchese, the Sustainability Campus Council's sub-committee on Curriculum. The Steering Committee of the Academic Senate is also currently represented on this council by the membership of Professor Georgina Colalillo, co-chair, with Professor Holly O'Donnell, of the Committee on Environment, Quality of Life, and Disability Issues. Last week, the Steering Committee was approached regarding the current campus debate over whether prohibitions on campus smoking might be considered a dimension of Sustainability. The Steering Committee wishes to inform members of the Senate that we have instructed the chairs of the Committee on Environment, Quality of Life, and Disability Issues to look into this possibility by considering (a) ways to gauge the sense of student opinion in this matter; (b) what, if any, legal restrictions might exist to protect the right of smokers to smoke in open-air facilities; and, finally (c) what other campuses in CUNY are doing to address this issue.

The Steering Committee looks forward to working with all committees of the Academic Senate to contribute to the efforts of the Sustainability Campus Council in any way possible. At the same time, we wish to encourage Council members to make full use of Queensborough's Governance system, by alerting the Steering Committee to those matters that might be most productively executed by committees of the Academic Senate, such as the Committee on Environment, Quality of Life, and Disability Issues, already empowered to address those "economic, social, and environmental factors"—from the infusion of environmental ethics into the curriculum to the recycling of paper on campus—that also fall within the purview of the newly-constituted Sustainability Campus Council.

- III. The Steering Committee is in receipt of the Report from the Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Curriculum to investigate the Status of the Humanities at Queensborough Community College. The Committee has made a recommendation that the College expand its current definition of the Humanities to facilitate the introduction of interdisciplinary electives. The Steering Committee wishes to note that the broad definition of "Humanities" advocated by the Subcommittee, which would "include Social Science, History, English, Foreign Language, Art, Speech & Drama, Philosophy and Physical Education (Dance)," would be consistent with current definitions of the Humanities embraced by the National Endowment for the Humanities in grant funding formulas. We have been informed by the chair of the Committee on Curriculum that a revision of this report to expand its current recommendations is forthcoming. This revised report will be furnished to senators when it is ready.
- IV. The Steering Committee also wishes to thank the outgoing chairs of the Committees on Admissions and Distance Education for their thoughtful annual reports and recommendations.

4. University and College Matters with Direct Bearing on The Senate

- I. Members of the Faculty should be in receipt of an advise concerning the fall conference of the University Faculty Senate, entitled "The Insider's Guide To CUNY." This conference has particularly been designed as an orientation for new faculty, although senior faculty are welcome

and encouraged to attend as well, as mentoring is crucial to professional success. Members of the University Faculty Senate are asking Department Chairs to especially invite faculty members hired in the last three years to attend this conference, which members of the University Faculty Senate are hoping will provide an opportunity for collegial interaction across campuses. A flyer, further describing the conference, is available at <http://www.cunyufs.org/Conference.pdf>. To register, faculty may e-mail vernice.blanchard@mail.cuny.edu or call 212.794.5538.

- II. As of fall, 2008, the office of Vice-Chancellor for Budget and Finance Ernesto Malave issues a regular on-line bulletin entitled *Financial Disclosure: Budget Bulletin from the CUNY Office of Budget and Finance*. Past and current issues of this publication are available at: <http://web.cuny.edu/administration/budget.html>

This publication is an extremely useful resource to faculty and Department Chairs seeking a sense of CUNY's financial direction, and the Chancellor's current plans for managing what is likely to be a protracted and significant budget crisis. The Steering Committee invites all senators to become familiar with this resource.

- III. Finally, the Steering Committee wishes to advise all Faculty members that the CUNY Board of Trustees plans to undertake a review of the newly instituted "Student Complaint Policy" in Spring, 2009. At the last plenary session of the University Faculty Senate (see minutes of this meeting, given in Attachment D of this report), Professor Ned Benton of John Jay College of Criminal Justice presented a chair's perspective on some of the areas in which the current policy might be considered worthy of amendment. For the convenience of Senators, we close this report with a recapitulation of the current policy. We invite all Senators to forward any amendment suggestions and/or concerns they may have to the Steering Committee chair at etai@qcc.cuny.edu. We will make sure these come to the attention of the University Faculty Senate committee members responsible for suggesting amendments to the Board of Trustees in the spring:

C. THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK – STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE:

RESOLVED, That the procedures for handling student complaints about faculty conduct in formal academic settings be adopted, effective February 1, 2007.

EXPLANATION: Although the University and its Colleges have a variety of procedures for dealing with student related issues, those procedures generally have not covered student complaints about faculty conduct in the classroom or other formal academic settings. The University respects the academic freedom of the faculty and will not interfere with it as it relates to the content or style of teaching activities. At the same time, however, the University recognizes its responsibility to establish procedures for addressing student complaints about faculty conduct that is not protected by academic freedom and not addressed in other procedures. The proposed procedures will accomplish this goal.

PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING STUDENT COMPLAINTS ABOUT FACULTY CONDUCT IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS

I. Introduction. The University and its Colleges have a variety of procedures for dealing with student-related issues, including grade appeals, academic integrity violations, student discipline, disclosure of student records, student elections, sexual harassment complaints,

disability accommodations, and discrimination. One area not generally covered by other procedures concerns student complaints about faculty conduct in the classroom or other formal academic settings. The University respects the academic freedom of the faculty and will not interfere with it as it relates to the content or style of teaching activities. Indeed, academic freedom is and should be of paramount importance. At the same time the University recognizes its responsibility to provide students with a procedure for addressing complaints about faculty treatment of students that are not protected by academic freedom and are not covered by other procedures. Examples might include incompetent or inefficient service, neglect of duty, physical or mental incapacity and conduct unbecoming a member of the staff.

II. Determination of Appropriate Procedure. If students have any question about the applicable procedure to follow for a particular complaint, they should consult with the chief student affairs officer. In particular, the chief student affairs officer should advise a student if some other procedure is applicable to the type of complaint the student has.

III. Informal Resolution. Students are encouraged to attempt to resolve complaints informally with the faculty member or to seek the assistance of the department chairperson or campus ombudsman to facilitate informal resolution.

IV. Formal Complaint. If the student does not pursue informal resolution, or if informal resolution is unsuccessful, the student may file a written complaint with the department chairperson or, if the chairperson is the subject of the complaint, with the academic dean or a senior faculty member designated by the college president. (This person will be referred to below as the "Fact Finder.")

A. The complaint shall be filed within 30 calendar days of the alleged conduct unless there is good cause shown for delay, including but not limited to delay caused by an attempt at informal resolution. The complaint shall be as specific as possible in describing the conduct complained of.

B. The Fact Finder shall promptly send a copy to the faculty member about whom the complaint is made, along with a letter stating that the filing of the complaint does not imply that any wrongdoing has occurred and that a faculty member must not retaliate in any way against a student for having made a complaint. If either the student or the faculty member has reason to believe that the department chairperson may be biased or otherwise unable to deal with the complaint in a fair and objective manner, he or she may submit to the academic dean or the senior faculty member designated by the college president a written request stating the reasons for that belief; if the request appears to have merit, that person may, in his or her sole discretion, replace the department chairperson as the Fact Finder.

C. The Fact Finder shall meet with the complaining student and faculty member, either separately or together, to discuss the complaint and to try to resolve it. The Fact Finder may seek the assistance of the campus ombudsman or other appropriate person to facilitate informal resolution.

D. If resolution is not possible, and the Fact Finder concludes that the facts alleged by the student, taken as true and viewed in the light most favorable to the student, establish that the conduct complained of is clearly protected by academic freedom, he or she shall issue a written report dismissing the complaint and setting forth the reasons for dismissal and

send a copy to the complaining student, the faculty member, the chief academic officer and the chief student affairs officer. Otherwise, the Fact Finder shall conduct an investigation. The Fact Finder shall separately interview the complaining student, the faculty member and other persons with relevant knowledge and information and shall also consult with the chief student affairs officer and, if appropriate, the college ombudsman. The Fact Finder shall not reveal the identity of the complaining student and the faculty member to others except to the extent necessary to conduct the investigation. If the Fact Finder believes it would be helpful, he or she may meet again with the student and faculty member after completing the investigation in an effort to resolve the matter. The complaining student and the faculty member shall have the right to have a representative (including a union representative, student government representative or attorney) present during the initial meeting, the interview and any post-investigation meeting.

E. At the end of the investigation, the Fact Finder shall issue a written report setting forth his or her findings and recommendations, with particular focus on whether the conduct in question is protected by academic freedom, and send a copy to the complaining student, the faculty member, the chief academic officer and the chief student affairs officer. In ordinary cases, it is expected that the investigation and written report should be completed within 30 calendar days of the date the complaint was filed.

V. Appeals Procedure. If either the student or the faculty member is not satisfied with the report of the Fact Finder, the student or faculty member may file a written appeal to the chief academic officer within 10 calendar days of receiving the report. The chief academic officer shall convene and serve as the chairperson of an Appeals Committee, which shall also include the chief student affairs officer, two faculty members elected annually by the faculty council or senate and one student elected annually by the student senate. The Appeals Committee shall review the findings and recommendations of the report, with particular focus on whether the conduct in question is protected by academic freedom. The Appeals Committee shall not conduct a new factual investigation or overturn any factual findings contained in the report unless they are clearly erroneous. If the Appeals Committee decides to reverse the Fact Finder in a case where there has not been an investigation because the Fact Finder erroneously found that the alleged conduct was protected by academic freedom, it may remand to the Fact Finder for further proceedings. The committee shall issue a written decision within 20 calendar days of receiving the appeal. A copy of the decision shall be sent to the student, the faculty member, the department chairperson and the president.

VI. Subsequent Action. Following the completion of these procedures, the appropriate college official shall decide the appropriate action, if any, to take. For example, the department chairperson may decide to place a report in the faculty member's personnel file or the president may bring disciplinary charges against the faculty member. Disciplinary charges may also be brought in extremely serious cases even though the college has not completed the entire investigative process described above; in that case, the bringing of disciplinary charges shall automatically suspend that process. Any action taken by a college must comply with the bylaws of the University and the collective bargaining agreement between the University and the Professional Staff Congress.

VII. Campus Implementation. Each campus shall implement these procedures and shall distribute them widely to administrators, faculty members and students and post them on the college website.

VIII. Board Review. During the spring 2009 semester, the Chancellery shall conduct a review of the experience of the colleges with these procedures, including consultation with administrators, faculty and students, and shall report the results of that review to the Board of Trustees, along with any recommended changes.