

Academic Conduct Committee

Annual Report 2004-2005

August 31, 2005

To: Virinder Moudgil
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

From: Serge Kruk
Mathematics and Statistics
Chair, Academic Conduct Committee

Roster

The members of the committee, whose work should be commended, were

Becker, Anne	Rhetoric, Communication and Journalism
Brown, Nancy	Teacher Development and Educational
Kietlinska, Kasia	Rhetoric, Communication and Journalism
Long, Michael	Education and Human Services
McIntosh, Glenn	Student Affairs
Miree, Cynthia	Business Administration
Pfeiffer, Kathleen	English
Riley-Doucet, Cheryl	Nursing
Ring, Dan	Kresge Library
Rosenthal, Sam	Linguistics
Thompson, Teresa	Nursing

Annual Case Load and Trend

The full committee heard 35 cases and another 58 cases were handled in an administrative hearing, an unfortunate record. On a positive note, the fraction of cases withdrawn has decreased notably; a good indicator that we are reaching a general agreement on what constitute a breach of the Oakland University code of conduct. Ideally, this number should eventually be zero.

To provide an overview of the work of the committee, which increases every year, I have extracted data from the memorandum of Karen Lloyd, Assistant Dean of Students, for the current academic year, and from previous annual reports for the past years.

The trend holds: there is yet another increase in the number of cases, only partly due to the increased enrollment at Oakland. I believe that part of the increase is due to a more favourable perception of the committee's work across campus. It is unlikely that students cheat more, only that more are getting caught and brought to the attention of the committee. In fact, we know that only a fraction of violations reach the committee.

Year	Cases	Students
1997-1998	12	19
1998-1999	19	28
1999-2000	22	37
2000-2001	32	44
2001-2002	48	55
2002-2003	66	94
2003-2004	63	82
2004-2005	71	112

Class Status	Students
Freshman	27
Sophomore	12
Junior	27
Senior	38
Graduate	5
Post-Baccalaureate	1
Guest	2

For the first time, this year, the Dean of Students' office tabulated the students class status. This provides an interesting insight: it dispels the notion that students who cheat are young, fresh out of high school, and have yet to learn proper academic behaviour. In fact, seniors were the worst offenders this year.

Towards Uniform Sanctions

One of the reasons for the existence of the Academic Conduct Committee is that the treatment of students should be uniform across the university. To that end, in cooperation with the registrar's office, some procedures were modified to close a loophole relating to dropped courses. This was prompted by a few cases of students who managed to drop a course where they were charged (and ultimately found guilty) with academic misconduct, avoiding the usual 0.0 grade usually assigned in such cases.

Unfortunately, much remains to be done to ensure similar treatment of students for similar offenses. I will illustrate: If student A copies a lab report from student B in a given class and both are charged, *as they should*, the committee will almost always find both guilty, (unless student B was both unaware of the plagiarism and had done his best to ensure that his work remained hidden from prying eyes). In contrast, if student A had asked a student, say C, of a previous semester's class for the same lab report, then student C escapes scrutiny as neither the professor teaching this semester is aware of him, nor is it the Dean of Students office's responsibility to act as prosecutor. This suggest that someone, possibly a member of the Academic Conduct Committee, should take on the role of prosecutor and bring forth a case. There are a number of such loopholes that the committee has discussed and will proceed to close.

In the same spirit of uniform sanctions, and to dispel the myth, rampant on campus, that no meaningful penalties are ever given out, I will document the **usual minimal** sanctions an Oakland student can expect if found guilty of plagiarism, the most common offense. These are not rules, as there is variation.

Freshman	One-semester suspension
Sophomore and Junior	Two-semester suspension
Senior	Three-semester suspension
Grad student	One year suspension
Guest student and Repeat offenders	Expulsion

Sometimes these suspension are, or are seen, as purely punitive but often they are in the best interest of the student who has slipped because of poor time management or some burden unrelated to his academic life. To these sanctions is always added probation. Sometimes, work is required of the student, in the form of an essay or some research on ethics. Often, regular visits to the Academic Skills Center or with an advisor are mandated. When warranted, a appointment is made for the student to meet with a counselor at the Graham Health Center. Always, the committee strives to educate and help the student.

The Dean of Students Office, particularly Roxanne Kolar Knudsen and Karen Lloyd, provided invaluable support throughout the year.