The Faculty Senate Agenda Committee charged the Academic Policy Committee (APC) during 2012-2013 with two charges:

1) Review the University’s policies on academic dishonesty as described by the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) and make any recommendations to modify such policies, and
2) Review best practices and University safeguards for course offerings to ensure excellence in teaching with special emphasis on identifying and using specific expertise where it is found within the University.

**Charge 1: Findings**

To accomplish our first charge, we invited Mary Wegmann, Director of OSCCR, as a special member of the committee to assist us in the review of the academic integrity (AI) policies. Over last year and this year the APC also consulted with representatives of the Student Government Association on their concerns about current the current AI policy.

1. The student representatives view the current two-tiered sanction structure, in which expulsion is the penalty for a second offence, as unusually harsh. They also report that some of the language of the current AI policy, such as its focus on “intentional” misuse of material, is unclear. The APC concurs there needs to be a careful review of the AI language by both OSCCR and University Counsel.

2. OSCCR is similarly concerned that a first violation of the AI policy currently results in the same sanction regardless of severity. For example, a student found responsible for plagiarizing an entire paper receives the same sanction as a student found responsible for cheating on one four point question on a math assignment. Furthermore, a rising number of AI violations involve international students and those pursuing degrees in the College of Professional Studies. In light of experience with these students, OSCCR staff believes that sanctions need to be adjusted to give students more opportunity to learn from their mistakes and not be moved to expulsion in just two violations.

3. OSCCR seeks to have more opportunity to exercise discretion in sanctioning students found responsible for violating AI policies, regardless of severity of the violation. Current AI policy at NU does not allow for such discretion. For example, current AI policy mandates that all allegations of an AI violation be heard by the Student Conduct Board. This does not allow complaints of an alleged violation to be “kept on file” for information purposes. OSCCR did an extensive review of what other institutions do in terms of their sanctions for violations of their AI policies and
found many institutions do have greater flexibility with more levels to reach prior to expulsion.

4. The APC is concerned that faculty still underreports potential violations and that first violations often do not reach OSCCR. Faculty may underreport for a variety of reasons including not having the time to be involved with the hearing process, not wanting to go through the discomforts of the formal grievance process, and wanting to avoid potential negative interactions with the student. The two-offense AI policy may also hinder faculty from reporting since they may recognize it puts the student at high risk of expulsion. The APC believes that an AI policy with more flexibility in sanctions and with the option of reporting complaints for file purposes only might facilitate increased faculty reporting.

5. The APC believes that underreporting of alleged violations of the AI policies may also be due to a lack of awareness by faculty of AI policies, sanctions, and procedures for reporting violations. The APC believes that both faculty and students would benefit from a mandatory requirement to complete an online tutorial and quiz similar to the online training recently offered on sexual harassment. A prevention focus involving mandatory education may help improve both reporting and create more clarity among Northeastern faculty and students concerning our expectations of academic integrity. This may also result in a decline in cases of misunderstanding AI policies. Both Information Technology and faculty experts consulted by the APC agreed that a mandatory online tutorial and quiz was a feasible approach that could be implemented with the appropriate resources.

**Charge 1: Resolutions**

On the basis of its investigation of charge 1, the Academic Policy Committee makes the following resolutions:

Be it resolved that:

1. The Senate supports in principle OSCCR’s plan to implement a new sanction structure ranging from probation to expulsion for any violation of the Academic Integrity policy. Typical sanctions will include probation for a first offense, deferred suspension for a second offense, and expulsion for a third offense. OSCCR will be given discretion in assigning a sanction according to severity of the current incident and the student’s prior conduct history. Three violations of the Academic Integrity policy will result in expulsion.

2. The Senate supports in principle OSCCR’s request to have discretion to decide whether an alleged violation requires review by the Student Conduct Board. Cases not referred to the Student Conduct Board will be retained on file by OSCCR.

3. The Senate recommends that OSCCR, with the appropriate resources and consultation with individuals with expertise in academic affairs, design a mandatory online tutorial and
quiz for both faculty and students on academic integrity policies, sanctions, and reporting procedures.

4. The Senate endorses OSCCR’s plan to finalize these revisions of the AI policy in consultation with the Office of General Counsel.

Respectfully Submitted,

2012-2013 Academic Policy Committee:
Professor Nathaniel Rickles, BCHS-Pharmacy Practice, Chair
Professor Nathan Felde, CAMD-Art + Design
Vice Provost Mary Loeffelholz, Provost’s Office
Professor Coleen Pantalone, CBA-Associate Dean, Undergraduate Program
Professor Dagmar Sternad, COS-Biology
Professor David Zgarrick, BCHS-Pharmacy Practice
Professor Moneesh Upmanyu, COE-Mechanical & Industrial

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