

Attachment #2

Functions of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC):

1. Serves as court of appeals for undergraduate students dismissed due to failure to meet academic standards, as described in Millersville University academic policies (<http://www.millersville.edu/about/administration/policies/pdf/academics/Academic%20Policy-G%20-%20Advisement.pdf>)
2. Serves as court of appeals for undergraduate students denied a degree.
3. Considers academic amnesty petitions.
4. Advises Faculty Senate of its interpretation and implementation of undergraduate student academic policies.

Background:

Of the four functions, #1 represents the largest workload for the ASC. When a student is dismissed from the University for academic reasons, the student, may appeal the dismissal to the ASC. The appeal must be in writing. In addition, a dismissed student has the right to supplement the written appeal with an in-person appeal before the ASC (typically, a subcommittee of the ASC). The hearings of appeals take place over the course of two days during January and June. Of the 179 academic dismissals at the end of the Spring 2008 semester, there were 73 appeals, of which 20 were letter-only appeals.

When the ASC considers such cases, they first review the academic record of the dismissed student with the goal of diagnosing the academic strengths and weaknesses of the student. They then review any extenuating circumstances the student presents that may have contributed to the dismissal. Next, they review the student's proposed plan of action to return to good academic standing. Then the ASC decides whether the student can succeed academically at the University and they render an appeal decision. Finally, whether or not the appeal is upheld, the ASC presents the student with a recommended plan of action for academic success.

Timeline:

During and after January 2008 hearings: Two members of the ASC approached Sikora with concerns about student representation on the ASC. These concerns focused on professionalism, confidentiality, and qualifications.

Spring 2008 semester: Sikora put the question of student representation on the ASC to the ASC. There was very little debate, as much of the internal ASC discussion focused on proposed changes to the attached Academic Policy document. The vote was 17-1-1 to eliminate student representation on the ASC, with the understanding that corresponding language would be inserted into the revised ASC Bylaws document.

Summer 2008 semester: Sikora informed Office of Student Affairs of the vote. The Vice President for Student Affairs expressed concern.

Summer 2008 semester: Sikora met with the Associate Provost for Academic Administration, who suggested the potential compromise of allowing students to be representatives on the ASC, but prohibit the students taking part in the hearings. The ASC was presented with this compromise and there was no dissent.

Fall 2008 semester: Sikora informed the Vice President for Student Affairs of the compromise via email and asked for feedback, but received none.

Fall 2008 semester: Sikora incorporated the compromise into the revised ASC Bylaws document and presented said document to Faculty Senate on 16 September 2008.

Fall 2008 semester: Shortly thereafter, the Associate Provost for Academic Administration contacted Sikora with concerns about the student representation issue. He offered to meet with the ASC to discuss his concerns.

Fall 2008 semester: The Associate Provost for Academic Administration met with AY 07-08 and AY 08-09 members of the ASC on 16 October 2008. A healthy discussion ensued. For example, the Associate Provost for Academic Administration suggested the qualification issue surrounding student representation at the hearings could be overcome via training and vetting.

Fall 2008 semester: The minutes from the meeting referenced above were emailed to AY07-08 and AY 08-09 members of the ASC. In order to allow an opportunity for additional internal ASC discussion via email, Sikora motioned to postpone further consideration of the ASC Bylaws proposal that is currently active at Faculty Senate until 28 October 2008. The motion was intended to prevent a potential vote by Faculty Senate on the Bylaws proposal at its 21 October 2008 meeting. The motion was first made within the ASC. Having passed, the motion was then made within Faculty Senate on 21 October 2008. Again, the motion passed.

Fall 2008 semester: On 21 October 2008, DiBartolomeis motioned within the ASC to withdraw the ASC Bylaws proposal from Faculty Senate. The motion was seconded by Piperberg. Sikora set the period of debate to 24 October 2008 and asked for a vote, via email to Sikora, by noon on 25 October 2008. A healthy email discussion ensued.

Fall 2008 semester: The vote on the above motion was 13-7 against. Thus, the motion failed.

Other PASSHE Schools:

Of the 13 other PASSHE schools, only Kutztown and Cheyney permit students to be a part of the academic dismissal appeal process (East Stroudsburg University did not yet return my email). For both Kutztown and Cheyney, there are no in-person appeals.

Today:

Members of the ASC are present to answer your questions. In addition, several members who feel strongly about the student representation issue, but could not be present today, asked that I read their comments to Faculty Senate.