REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO MISSISSAUGA ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE of Erindale College Council meeting held on Monday, March 29, 2010 at 1:10 p.m. in Room 3129, South Building.


In attendance: M. Pilar Galvez (UTMSU)

1. Minutes of the previous meeting (February 22, 2010)

Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. Reports of Committees and Officers

a) Academic Appeals Board – annual report: Professor Gordon Anderson, Chair, AAB

The Academic Appeals Board Annual report is attached hereto as Appendix A.

Professor Anderson summarized the annual report and statistics from September 1, 2008 until August 31, 2009.

He noted that if appellants were unhappy with the decision of the Board, they could appeal to the Governing Council Academic Appeals Committee as a final step in the appeals process. If this happens, Governing Council invites the Chair of the AAB to defend the Board’s decision.

Professor Anderson thanked the faculty, staff and students who served on the Academic Appeals Board for volunteering to serve on a Committee that takes up a substantial amount of their time.

The Chair opened the floor to questions.

In response to a member’s question about the process before appeals go to the AAB, Professor Anderson explained that students whose petitions are turned down by the Committee On Standing (COS) from the Office of the Registrar can then appeal their case to the AAB, which gives them the first opportunity to present their case in person.

In response to another member’s question about whether appeal number were increasing or decreasing over the past few years, Professor Anderson noted that they were on the downtrend, since the introduction of the 3.0FTE free course withdrawals were introduced by the Office of the Registrar last year.

b) Academic Discipline – annual report: Lucy Gaspini, Academic Affairs Officer, Office of the Dean and Professor Gage Averill, Dean

The annual report of the Academic Discipline area is attached hereto as Appendix B.
Ms. Gaspini summarized the procedure under the Code of Behaviour On Academic Matters and showed a flow chart on the process. She noted that the process begins when an instructor believes that an academic offense has been committed. The student meets with the instructor and if after the meeting, the instructor feels that an offense has been committed and if the work in question is worth less than 10% of the grade, the case is submitted to the departmental chair. The department chair reviews the information to ensure that all the information is there, but does not meet with the student. If the student admits the offense and if the mark is work is worth less than 10% of the grade, then the Chair can deal with the offense at this level and impose a penalty (zero on assignment.)

If the work is worth more than 10% of the grade, then a meeting with a Dean’s designate is scheduled. If the student does not admit to the offence and the dean’s designate finds that an offence has been committed, then the dean’s designate recommends that the case be forwarded to the tribunal for resolution. At the tribunal level, the student does not have to admit to the offence; legal counsel is present and a finding of guilty or not guilty is pronounced.

Sanctions imposed can vary from receiving a mark of zero on an assignment, a written reprimand, to one full year of suspension and with a tribunal ruling, from a written reprimand to a five year suspension or finally a consideration by the President for an expulsion.

Ms. Gaspini reported that for 2008-09, UTM had 389 academic offence cases. Broken down by year as follows:

- First year: 105
- Second year: 114
- Third year: 83
- Fourth year: 88

Cases were also shown broken down by department, with the departments of Biology (68) and ICC (49) experiencing the most academic offences and the departments of Management (8), Philosophy (10) and Sociology (10) the least.

Ms. Gaspini showed a breakdown of academic offences by type, with the most cases involving plagiarism (182) and unauthorized aids or assistance (155).

The Dean commented that the academic offences office has recently been expanded, but emphasized that the goal is not to simply add more staff to handle the increasing number of offences, but to harvest information better in order to understand in real time what is going on in the departments regarding these cases. In addition, changes to the code will also be made and a meeting with the Office of the Provost is forthcoming on that topic. He noted that he would report back to the Academic Affairs Committee on these changes.

Professor Averill also explained that the Office of the Provost, will also increase its education efforts so that students know about academic offence penalties and about what constitutes an infraction, with the long term goal of reducing the rate of increases in these types of offences. He added that he recognized the very large amount of work this was for departments and has therefore considered hiring additional staff and paying sessional faculty for this kind of work.
The Chair opened the floor to questions.

A member commented that data need to be very carefully analyzed by department, because some departments were perhaps just better at catching academic offences than others or the nature of assignments may vary to such a degree as to making recognizing offences much easier.

Another member remarked that there needs to be analysis about whether there was an increase in offences as a result of the increased number of students on campus, or whether cases are increasing above and beyond student numbers increasing. Ms. Gaspini answered that in her opinion, departments were much more vigilant about catching offences than in the past. In addition, the Dean remarked that the digitalization of information has led to easier detection of offences. He explained that students’ stability of work has eroded, in that they grab information from previously inaccessible places and insert it into their work, not knowing what constitutes plagiarism. In addition, forms of digital assistance have become much more sophisticated.

The Registrar noted that chief presiding officers at exams were much more vigilant and well trained and were catching more offences.

The Chair noted that it would be helpful if there were an easy to follow guide for faculty on how to handle academic offences.

c) Committee On Standing – annual report: Diane Crocker, Registrar

The annual report of the Committee on Standing is attached hereto as Appendix C.

The Registrar reported that the Late Withdrawal policy (students permitted 3.0FTE LWD’s) has had huge impact on the number of petitions filed, which went from a total of 1798 in 2007-08 to 741 in 2008-09. LWD’s went from 91 in 2007-08 to a total of 2574 in 2008-09.

Out of 741 petitions for late withdrawal without academic penalty, 408 were granted (333 refused.) Out of a total of 116 petitions for an extension of time for term work beyond the end of the course, 86 were granted (30 refused.)

The Registrar showed data on deferred exams for the 2008-09 year and noted that a new process was introduced in April of 2009 whereby everyone was required to write their exam one week following the original exam date. The deferral of unwritten examinations processed prior to April of 2009 was a total of 867. Most of these petition decisions are made in the Office of the Registrar and those wishing to appeal these decisions, do so to the Committee On Standing. Ms. Crocker listed the statistics for petitions for the 2008-09 year for one year (87) and three year suspensions (15), returning early from a three year suspension (8), and lifting refused further registration decisions (3). Other petitions included requesting an exception to a degree requirement (22), a second degree (4), and late enrolment (74.)

Committee On Standing total number of cases were listed as follows: late withdrawals (66), deferred exams (7), extension of time (7), one year suspension lifts (14), three year suspension lift (1) and refused further registration (1.) For a detailed breakdown of all of the above statistics and now many were granted and refused, please refer to the appropriate appendix C to this report.
Ms. Crocker noted that many more students were writing their deferred exams than in previous years and that their success rates on these exams were also better than previously.

The Registrar also showed data comparing enrollment numbers with the number of petitions for various years.

3. New Business:

There was no new business.

The Chair announced that the next meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee would be in the fall of 2010.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Chair ______________________________ Secretary ____________________________