

## EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE

### Annual Report

### AY 2007-2008

Prepared by David F. Delchamps

19 August 2008

The EPC, whose 2007-2008 membership appears as Appendix 4 below, met twice during the Fall 2007 semester. The first meeting occurred on 27 September 2007. We spent considerable time at that meeting discussing an issue that Student Trustee Kate Duch had raised during a meeting with EPC Chair Delchamps. Kate had heard that median grades for all courses would appear on all students' transcripts starting sometime during the Spring 2008 semester after the new student-records system went live. She felt that this was unfair particularly to upperclass students who had never seen median grades on transcripts who had had online access to course-by-course median-grade information throughout their time at Cornell. They had used such information to pick courses and were unaware that a plan was in place to put median course grades on transcripts.

The Senate had passed legislation in 1996 mandating both public availability of median course grades and appearance of those grades on student transcripts. The public-availability part, as it happened, was much easier to implement than the transcript part; hence the delay. Kate had proposed that the university not record on any student's transcript the median course grade for any course taken prior to Spring 2008.

Committee members were divided on how to proceed. The problem ended up solving itself. Kate discovered the following text in the original 1996 Senate motion:

This policy shall become effective as soon as technically feasible, but will apply only to classes entering after the effective date.

followed by

This procedure will be introduced so that each undergraduate class will have a uniform transcript. For example, if the procedure goes into effect in Fall, 1998, it will affect only students who begin their first year in 1998 or later years.

End of story.

The EPC spent the remainder of its 27 September 2007 meeting getting acquainted and touching upon some key agenda items for the upcoming year. Delchamps was eager to begin work on updating the faculty's legislation on final examinations and other end-of-semester exercises. That legislation had been an issue since Spring 2006, when an EPC motion brought the current wording to the attention of the Senate, causing considerable consternation (see the EPC Annual Reports from AY 2005-2006 and 2006-2007). Committee member David Henderson also wanted to continue EPC's investigation, begun during AY 2006-2007, of egregiously late posting of final grades. He was hoping we could resolve the issue before he went on leave during Spring 2008. After some discussion,

the members agreed to have Delchamps and Charlie Walcott draft a memo to college deans stating essentially that flagrantly late posting of final grades is happening, causes serious problems for students, and needs to stop. That memo, which benefited from several committee members' input, is Appendix 1.

David Gries then proposed that the EPC consider coming up with a prelim make-up policy. He related the following anecdote: Professor A gives long prelims, and her 2.5-hour evening prelim overlaps the time slot for the prelim in another of the affected student's courses. Professor A argues that Professor B should offer a make-up since B's course is larger than Professor A's. B counters that his grading policy allows a student to drop the lowest prelim grade, so no make-up is necessary.

Finally, Charlie Walcott mentioned that Student and Academic Services might be willing to give up one day of Fall Orientation. The important consequence would be that we might be able finally to grant Labor Day as a full university holiday, or perhaps not hold classes on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. (The news from SAS was actually a semi-official confirmation of something Delchamps had heard from Kent Hubbell during AY 2006-2007 and had communicated to EPC at that time. Abby Cohn's lengthy memo to EPC dated 19 November 2006 had brought the Labor Day issue to EPC's attention yet again. In following up on Cohn's memo, Delchamps had asked Hubbell what the possibilities were regarding shortening Orientation, and Hubbell had expressed optimism that SAS might be willing to give up one day of Orientation.)

During the month of November 2007, Delchamps received an e-mail from graduate student Nighthawk Evensen concerning the Code of Academic Integrity. The e-mail appears on the first page of Appendix 2. Delchamps agreed to bring it up for discussion at EPC's next meeting, which occurred on 30 November 2007. At that meeting, Charlie Walcott mentioned that he had felt for some time that it would be worthwhile taking a close look at the Academic Integrity Code and, in particular, to discuss whether implementing some kind of honor code at Cornell would be beneficial. Charlie argued in favor of forming a committee with wide university representation to take on that task. The EPC supported that course of action, and Delchamps, with committee members' input, subsequently drafted an e-mail reply to Evensen. That e-mail appears on the second page of Appendix 2.

The remainder of the 30 November 2008 meeting was devoted to the end-of-semester-exercise issue. Charlie had circulated a survey to academic units during the spring and summer of 2007 (see EPC Annual Report for AY 2006-2007). Committee members had had a chance to look at the many and widely varied responses.

We all agreed that we need to find some way of accommodating the "variety of end-of-semester experiences." People disobey the current legislation blatantly, and often with good pedagogical reason. We need to set guidelines that will work for the majority of courses and come up with a protocol for handling exceptions. We'd like to produce legislation that makes those exceptions rare.

Tom Owens from the 2006-07 EPC had suggested that we focus on mandating "truth in advertising." In other words, if a course plans to do something

unorthodox at the end of the semester, the catalogue description of the course (or some online version thereof) ought to specify exactly how the course will depart from standard procedure. Students would then be able to plan in advance. Susan Suarez pointed out that if we did something like that we might be putting too much of an onus on students unless we tread carefully. Georg Hofstaetter noted that Arts and Sciences courses make such information available to students already and stated his view that evaluation methods should not influence students' choices of what courses to take. David Gries suggested that Schedulizer might be a good home for the "advertising" we were considering.

We all agreed, especially after reading faculty responses to Charlie's survey, that we need to be careful if we decide to implement our idea that courses ought to provide a "drop-dead date" during exam week for course-work completion. Specifying such a date was originally David Henderson's idea. His desire was to provide students with a "full semester," including at least part of exam period, during which to complete their course requirements. Certainly, a uniform university-wide final due-date is not what we'd be shooting for. Several committee members spoke strongly in favor of allowing courses' "drop-dead dates" to stagger themselves naturally over exam period by pegging them to scheduled final-exam dates, even in courses without finals. Maria Cook, for one, felt that any such restriction on courses was unnecessarily rigid.

Georg stated, and several others agreed, that if the problem faculty have with the "drop-dead date" idea is that it might not allow them enough time to grade, then we should look for a way to extend the due-date for grades, which is now nominally 72 hours after the final exam (when the course has a final exam). Advances in information technology should make it easy to do that. Again, we must exercise caution, particularly since the sequences of events at the ends of the fall and spring semesters are quite different from each other.

Unfortunately, the 2007-2008 EPC included no member from Architecture, Arts, and Planning, which has some unique problems regarding timing final presentations associated with studio courses.

Delchamps figured it might be helpful for someone to float a proposal for EPC to discuss and revise (or completely trash) at its next meeting. He volunteered to do that.

As it happened, the next EPC meeting did not occur until 12 March 2008. That meeting was also EPC's final meeting of the academic year. Fortunately, we were able, at that meeting and subsequently over e-mail, to draft a motion for Senate consideration. Delchamps presented the motion at the April Senate meeting, which lacked a quorum, and considerable discussion ensued. He presented the (slightly revised) motion again at the well attended May Senate meeting, and the motion passed. The motion appears as Appendix 3. During the May Senate meeting, Delchamps accepted a friendly amendment eliminating the phrase "eight-day" in the second paragraph and replacing the preceding "an" with "a." For reference, the old Faculty Handbook legislation still appears as of today (19 August 2008) at

<http://www.theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/handbook/toc.html>

During AY 2008-2009, the EPC will likely want to address the two agenda items alluded to in the first two paragraphs of page 2. These are

- The shortened-Orientation/Labor Day issue, and
- Policy regarding prelim make-ups.

### **Appendix 1**

Memo to university faculty regarding late posting of final grades  
November 2007

To: College Deans

From: Charles Walcott, Dean of the University Faculty

The University Educational Policy Committee and I are concerned about the many instances of late grades. The committee discussed this problem earlier this semester and has asked me to share its concerns with you and ask that you remind your faculty of your college's grade submission policy, monitor this problem in your college, and deal with it as necessary.

The 2002 edition of the Faculty Handbook, pp. 80-82, says that, "The due date for submitting final grades to college offices is set by each college independently but is normally within seventy-two hours of the completion of the examination. Prompt submission of final grades is essential inasmuch as a great deal of processing follows this submission."

Late grades can create serious hardships for students, including loss of scholarship aid, unwarranted academic-deficiency action, loss of recognition for academic achievement, and emotional stress.

The EPC is concerned that a number of faculty flagrantly and, in some cases, habitually, violate grade-submission deadlines. One can accept an occasional one- or two-day delay, but a few faculty regularly submit grades several weeks or even months late. This practice is unacceptable.

The EPC requests that you remind faculty of the deadlines that your college has established. The EPC also proposes that the names of faculty who fail to submit grades on time, without a real excuse, be brought to your attention immediately and that some sanction be imposed if compliance is not forthcoming.

## Appendix 2

From dte6@cornell.edu Mon Mar 17 23:05:22 2008  
Date: Fri, 28 Sep 2007 20:39:59 -0400 (EDT)  
From: Nighthawk Evensen <dte6@cornell.edu>  
To: dfd1@cornell.edu  
Subject: Question concerning Academic Integrity

Professor Delchamps,

Charlie Walcott informed me that you are the chair of the Faculty Senate's committee on educational policy and that I should contact you with a concern that I have regarding the Code of Academic Integrity.

Upon review of the Code I noticed that the Code incorporates no specific provision for finding it either a breach of academic integrity or as academic misconduct if a student were to become aware of another student's breach of conduct and fail to take action on this knowledge. The idea of this provision may be obliquely referenced in I.A.1 of the Code, however, I doubt that this would be cause for any reprimand if it was taken before an Academic Integrity Hearing Board.

I was intimately involved with the Honour Code as it existed at my undergraduate institution, which included a provision such as I refer to. I considered this one of the most integral components of ensuring academic integrity at my university. If a student realises that a fellow student has used unauthorized aid in taking an exam, or has copied or plagiarized another's work, it ought to be required that such information be delivered to the Academic Integrity Hearing Board. Allowing another to cheat without reprimand is as great an offense to academic integrity as cheating on one's own.

Please inform me as to how to present my case to whoever is responsible for considering changes to the Code.

Respectfully,

Nighthawk Evensen

--

Darrick T. Evensen  
60 Climer Circle  
West Sand Lake, NY 12196-2204

Amare et sapere vix deo conceditur

Damnant quod non intellegunt

From dave@ece.cornell.edu Sun Dec 2 20:14:32 2007  
Date: Sun, 2 Dec 2007 20:14:09 -0500 (EST)  
From: David F Delchamps <dave@ece.cornell.edu>  
Reply-To: David F. Delchamps <dfd1@cornell.edu>  
To: dte6@cornell.edu  
Cc: David F. Delchamps <dfd1@cornell.edu>  
Subject: Concerning the Academic Integrity Code

Dear Nighthawk,

I'm sorry it's taken me so long to get back to you regarding your e-mail earlier this semester regarding the Code of Academic Integrity. I wanted to let you know that I circulated your e-mail to the Educational Policy Committee and we did have a chance to discuss it at a recent meeting.

Concurrently, we learned that the Dean of the Faculty's office has formed an ad hoc committee consisting of faculty, staff, and students from representative bodies (the Student Assembly, Graduate and Professional Student Assembly, and University Assembly) whose charge is to take a broad look at the Code and report back to the EPC in the near future. I'll make sure to transmit your comments to the ad hoc committee.

Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

All the Best,

--David F. Delchamps--  
--EPC Chair--

### Appendix 3

What follows is text to replace the section titled “Final Examinations” that runs from the middle of page 81 to the middle of page 82 in the Faculty Handbook, ending just before the paragraph titled “Return of Exams, Papers, etc.”

#### *Final Examinations and Other End-of-Semester Exercises*

Advances in pedagogy and variations in practice across fields have broadened the range of commonly used end-of-semester evaluative exercises beyond traditional sit-down final examinations. The rules and guidelines that follow aim to protect students from unreasonable demands on their time while simultaneously providing instructors the flexibility necessary to design evaluative exercises appropriate to their courses.

The Academic Calendar sets aside after the last week of classes a six-day study period followed by an eight-day period for final examinations. The Registrar's Office assigns to every course a specific day and time during final-examination period at which time the course's final exam, if any, will take place. The designated final-exam days and times are scheduled carefully to minimize conflicts and spread students' workloads as evenly as possible over the exam period.

It is university policy to discourage more than two examinations for a student in one twenty-four hour time period. Members of the faculty are urged to grant student requests for a make-up examination, particularly if their course is the largest of the three involved and thus has the strongest likelihood of offering a makeup for other valid reasons, e.g. a student's illness or a death in a student's family.

Legislation of the University Faculty governing study period and final examinations and other end-of-semester exercises is as follows:

1. No final examinations may be given at a time other than the time appearing on the official examination schedule promulgated by the Registrar's Office without prior written permission of the dean of the faculty.
2. No permission will be given, for any reason, to schedule final examinations during the last week of classes or the study period preceding final examinations.
3. Permission will be given by the dean of the faculty to reschedule examinations during the examination period itself if requested in writing by the faculty member, but only on condition that a comparable examination also be given for students who wish to take it at the time the examination was originally scheduled. The faculty member requesting such a change will be responsible for making appropriate arrangements for rooms or other facilities in which to give the examination.



4. The final due date for a take-home final examination can be no earlier than the date appearing on the official examination schedule promulgated by the Registrar's Office without prior written permission of the dean of the faculty.
5. A course that requires a culminating end-of-semester exercise (for example, a paper, project report, final critique, oral presentation, or conference) in lieu of or in addition to a traditional final examination must advertise before the semester begins the nature of the exercise and the associated due date(s).
6. A course that requires a culminating end-of-semester exercise and does not offer a final examination must allow students at least until the date appearing on the official examination schedule promulgated by the Registrar's Office to complete submission of materials associated with the culminating exercise. (For example, a student making a presentation during the last week of classes or during study period will have at least until the scheduled final-exam date to submit a final write-up or equivalent.)

## Appendix 4

EPC members 2007-2008

David Delchamps, ENGR, Chair  
David Henderson, A&S  
Tom Owens, CALS  
David Gries, ENGR  
Georg Hoffstaetter, A&S  
Susan Suarez, Vet.  
Richard Penner, Hotel  
Jeffrey Sobal, CHE  
Linda Williams, CALS  
Maria Cook, ILR

Charles Walcott, Dean of the Faculty, ex officio  
Brad Anton, Associate Dean and Secretary of the Faculty, ex officio  
Michele Moody-Adams, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

We also invited Susan Murphy (representing Registrar) and David DeVries, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, College of Arts & Sciences, to all of our meetings.