

Annual Report

Committee on Academic Standing, 2007-2008

October 4, 2008

To the Faculty Executive Committee:

When I became Chair of CAS in August of 2007, it immediately occurred to me that everyone serving on the Committee would find it useful to have a detailed description of the undergraduate academic regulations. I discovered that faculty members sitting on the Committee had tended to acquire familiarity with the regulations by attending its meetings and absorbing information about the regulations and Committee procedures over the span of their tenure on the Committee. The same was true for many of the deans. The difficulty was, in part, that the regulations existed in many places but there seemed to be no one definitive source detailing the academic regulations and Committee's procedures. This inspired me to undertake an extensive overhaul of a CAS Handbook that had been compiled several years before and partially revised a few years later. The only way to achieve consistency, fairness, and consensus in our judgments, it seemed to me, was to have a comprehensive handbook available to every Committee member (about 30 people in all). I also initiated a semester-long orientation for new deans, and a ninety-minute orientation for new faculty Committee members to familiarize new Committee members with the regulations, underlying principles, and practices of the Committee. The Handbook is also being distributed later this month to all First Year Advisors.

The Committee undertook a number of changes in practice and procedure over the course of the year with two main goals in mind: 1) to be more self-conscious about the way we approached our work and to make our deliberations and rulings more transparent; 2) to address Dean Bergeron's aim to identify early, each term, and extend help to, students who run into academic difficulty. A number of our initiatives then, were directed with these aims in mind.

Attached is a summary of changes instituted over the past year.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Lassonde
Chair, Committee on Academic Standing
Deputy Dean of the College

- We now meet 10 times a year, except July and September, so that the Committee can devote more time to discussing our practices and policies (the Committee previously met 7 times a year).

- I compiled a “unified” set of academic regulations that represents the collective wisdom of the Faculty Rules, *the Course Announcement Bulletin*, the Registrar’s Website, the Dean of the College website, the Dean of the College Handbook, and the Committee on Academic Standing Handbook, which was partially revised in 2006. This fully revised and comprehensive CAS Handbook has been distributed to all sitting members of the Committee.

- Beginning August 2008 I will meet with new faculty Committee members (including new deans) to orient them to CAS policies and procedures.

- We changed deadlines for readmission from every meeting to December, May and August. This was instituted so that our readmission process would be in synch with that of the Office of Student Life. Students had found it confusing to have one set of deadlines for the Office of Student Life and a rolling deadline with CAS because even though we would accept petitions every month, if they also involved readmission with OSL, we wouldn’t consider them until December, May and August anyway.

- I assigned Readmitted students to a particular dean and to a member of the Faculty Advising Program to share responsibility for monitoring the student’s progress for his or her first two terms back at Brown.

- This year the voting members of the CAS in the Dean’s Office met with the Office of Student Life to discuss and agree upon procedures for authorizing Medical Leaves and Medical Leaves in Lieu of Suspension.

- I met with the Director of Financial Aid, Vice-President for Campus Life, and the Registrar to agree on a consistent separation date for students withdrawing themselves (or being withdrawn) from active enrollment. We needed to coordinate the application of effective dates for withdrawal in order to comply with federal financial aid guidelines. This same group developed a checklist for students leaving and returning to Brown that could be given to them at the time of their separation. This checklist was developed to ensure that students had met with everyone who needed to know about their departure and to ensure that students had all the information they needed before leaving and returning.

- I revised all of the letters sent by the Committee to students being Suspended or placed on Warning or Serious Warning.

- I revised all of the forms used by students petitioning the Committee.

- Before each monthly meeting I circulate a summary of each case to be considered by the Committee and cite the relevant academic regulations so that everyone can become familiar with the issues before we convene.
- I am bringing more cases to the Committee for its consideration than had been true in the recent past so that its new members (which were 7 in number in 2007-08) can gain an understanding of, and familiarity with, the range of petitions considered and how we think about them as a group.
- I formed a subcommittee of voting members to review cases coming before the Committee each month to determine whether or not they need to be heard by the full Committee.
- The DOC is now following up with every student on Serious Warning to be sure that those who do not come in to see a dean (after being instructed to do so by their Serious Warning letter), do in fact consult with a dean during the semester they are on Serious Warning. We are also notifying the students' advisors about their academic standing.
- The Registrar has joined me in establishing a "Deans's School," which meets weekly with new deans in the Dean of the College Office to orient them to the academic regulations and with CAS practices and procedures.
- In an attempt to provide better and more timely advising to Transfer students (who had been identified in a number of student surveys as being inadequately served by our advising system) CAS recommended that each Transfer student be assigned to a dean to meet before the first day of classes, and was assigned to a Faculty Advising Program member as their first-term advisor.
- Working with the Assistant Dean for Diversity Programs and the Office of Admission, the CAS coordinated efforts to identify and carefully match First-Year students from under-resourced secondary schools with an appropriate academic advisor. This was implemented in August.
- With the same group of students in mind, CAS helped to identify students eligible for a week-long "bridge" program for forty incoming First Year students. The program, called "Excellence at Brown" was conceived and implemented by Douglas Brown, Director of the Writing Center in August.