To: Keith Kleckner, Acting Provost

From: Jean S. Braun, Chairman, Academic Conduct Committee

Date: August 15, 1981

Re: Annual Report

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Office of the Provost

The Academic Conduct Committee had an extremely busy year, with hearings continuing into July. Approximately 25 students were brought before the Committee with a variety of allegations, most often that of cheating on examinations. In somewhat of a departure from previous years, a large proportion of the cases came from Engineering. Other cases were from Liberal Arts and one from Counseling and Guidance.

Statistics on these cases appear below. What I would like to do first in this report is to address some of the problems that the Committee encountered so that this important, though unfortunate, function can perhaps be better carried out in the future. Three major problems emerged this year: lack of understanding of the procedures on the part of faculty; some lack of appropriate preventive measures, again on the part of faculty; and unavailability of suitably graduated penalties.

Although it did not happen frequently, we found at least one glaring example of faculty interference with Committee procedures. Two students obviously plagiarized a paper (and admitted this at the hearing.) However, the faculty member, apparently on the advice of her department chairman, had excluded the students from class even before initiating the hearing process. This meant that the students had in effect already failed the course and it was impossible then for the Committee to approach the case and impose proper penalties since the students had been punished without due process. Department chairmen apparently need continued education on the University's academic conduct policies and procedures.

Several cases came before us from Engineering in which it had been impossible for the professor to observe misconduct. Questions were raised about possible cheating on the basis of similarities in response to examination questions. This is often an unreliable basis for a verdict of guilty. There was no such unreliability in a case from the Mathematics Department in which the professor had given alternate forms of a test and the student had given the right answers to the form she did not have. In several of the former instances, the Committee thought that the professor was accurate in his allegations, i.e. that the students were guilty. However, the fact that the students all had the same form of the test and that too much of the evidence depended on inference made it impossible for the Committee to uphold the professor, even though we were often certain he was right. We would like to urge, especially in large classes, that there be increased use of proctors and, if feasible, of alternate forms of tests. The problems can be identical, but with different numbers.

Finally, the Committee would appreciate a review of penalties. There seems to be too large a jump between suspension and immediate reinstatement--which many students observably regarded as a joke--and suspension for the following semester. In the latter instances, this had a differential effect. For some students, the "following semester" was the spring and summer, but, if the case was brought after the end of the spring, the penalty indicated the fall semester, or actually a harsher result. Re the question of penalties, the Committee found itself in a paradoxical position. We heard complaints occasionally that our penalties were so light as to be unmeaningful and, yet, when we imposed something more severe, as in the case of a student who wrote his own letters of recommendation for graduate school and signed professors' names, we were told that we were too harsh. It would be helpful to have a Senate subcommittee, perhaps, study this problem.

The process of making appointments to the Committee also deserves some attention. Hearings are necessarily scheduled according to the hours that the chairman can be present. The consequence is that some Committee members can never come and a heavy burden falls on those who can. Could the Steering Committee ask faculty who volunteer for a Committee as demanding as this one to submit a list of times available, ask the same of the chairman, and make some attempt to match the two? Nearly all of our hearings were held with the minimum number present. Had students exercised the right to ask one member to leave, a great number of the hearings would not have been held until a later date.

Now for the numbers:

Number of hearings 10/22/80-7/14/81	Males	Females	White	Black	Foreign* (irrespective of race)	LA	Eng.	HRD
25	16	9	12	0	13	7	17	1

*Majority Iranian

Verdicts: Guilty: 13
Not Guilty: 7
In five cases there was insufficient evidence and charges were dismissed

Six of the hearings involved seniors, four juniors, ten sophomores and five freshmen.

Faculty members who attended the greater number of hearings, and did their homework well, included (in no special order) Robert Gaylor, Barry Turett, Janice Guerriero, and Anne Federlein. Profs. Sarma Vishnubhotla, Ann Pogany and Billy Joe Minor also attended when possible. Student member Larry Tomlinson was present for nearly all hearings and Aaron Addrow was present for some. Dean Manuel Pierson and Mrs. Mondine McNeil were of invaluable service to the Committee, handling all necessary preliminary work, and we owe special thanks to Geraldine Graham, secretary in Student Services, who managed the complicated business of scheduling hearings and distributing material to Committee members.