

Appeals hit senate committee

By Cara Pesek
Staff writer

When the University of Nebraska-Lincoln raised its admission standards in 1997, something else increased as well – the number of appeals filed by academically dismissed students.

Now, the 10-member academic standards committee, which reviews the appeals of academically dismissed students, is too small to deal with the number of appeals, said Max Kirk, former chairman of the Committee on Committees.

The issue was brought before the members of the Academic Senate at their Tuesday afternoon meeting in the Nebraska East Union.

A new motion presented at the meeting could change both the size of the committee and the way its members are selected.

Don Gregory, director of general studies and an associate professor of English, said the committee has reviewed more than 20 appeals each year for the past four years.

Although it is necessary for only four or five members of the committee to view each appeal, with just 10 members, the committee often finds it difficult to schedule a time when enough members are able to attend, Gregory said.

Furthermore, no new members have volunteered to serve on the committee.

"The same people end up reading more than their fair share of appeals," he said.

When appeals are submitted, the committee members read them and determine whether it is in the best interests of everyone involved, including the university, to allow the students to remain enrolled.

Factors such as learning disabilities, high school, previous college performances and ACT scores are all taken into consideration.

Kirk, a construction management professor, presented a motion that would increase the number of members on the academic standards committee.

"Because we're getting a lot more appeals in front of this committee, we need a lot more people," Kirk said.

The motion would also change the way members are selected.

Currently, committee members simply volunteer. If the motion would pass, they would

instead be chosen by the colleges' deans.

The motion would also allow staff members to serve on the committee. Currently, only faculty members can serve.

Professor of Mathematics and Statistics Walter Mientka said many of the cases presented to the committee were measured by how well students performed in the classes taught by faculty members.

Because only faculty members know the expectations they have of their students, it isn't fair for the staff members to determine the students' academic fates, Mientka said.

However, Kirk said some faculty members actually requested staff members be allowed to serve because staff members often write the appeals.

Gail Latta, Academic Senate president, said

the executive committee was also unsure whether staff members should be allowed to serve on the committee.

"This was discussed at length, and we didn't agree," Latta said.

Other members, including Kathy Prochaska-Cue, thought the lack of volunteerism hinted at a larger problem.

"Since we know (volunteering) is an important part of our role as leaders, why isn't this working? I think it isn't seen as a valued role by faculty members," Prochaska-Cue said.

No action was taken on the motion at Tuesday's meeting. The issue will be discussed again next month.

"If we can get 22 people to volunteer by the next meeting, this isn't an issue anymore," Kirk said.

Senate identifies semester goals

By Cara Pesek
Staff writer

A new semester means new items on the Academic Senate agenda.

Gail Latta, Academic Senate president, said establishing a way to negotiate contracts between the university and faculty members regarding the ownership of intellectual property tops the priority list.

Intellectual property, which includes Web pages and recorded lectures and courses on videotape, among other things, is a relatively new concept, Latta said.

When a faculty member writes a book or undertakes other projects outside of the classroom, the professor is entitled to those profits, Latta said.

But when professors build Web pages or record lectures, they use university resources, she said.

The question then is: Who gets the royalties?

"The institution doesn't fully compensate faculty for what they do with their knowledge," she said.

Forums addressing this issue have been

scheduled by the Academic Senate for Thursday in the Nebraska Union and for Jan. 21 in the Nebraska East Union.

Also this semester, the Academic Senate is rewriting a bylaw that could change the way faculty members' time is allocated.

Faculty members are expected to divide their time among teaching research, service, extension and administrative duties.

The rewritten bylaw would allow faculty members to spend more time in the areas they excel in, Latta said.

"We want to respect academic freedom while addressing the needs of the departments," she said.

A post-tenure review policy implemented almost two years ago will also be looked at by the Academic Senate.

The policy stated if professors had two consecutive years deemed below satisfactory by end-of-the-year evaluations, they would undergo a broader review.

But the criteria for what was below satisfactory wasn't in effect until after the new policy was approved. Latta said the policy was unfair until the criteria had been in effect for two years.

Flu slams Lincoln; students fare OK

By Matthew Beermann
Staff writer

Winter means flu season, but this year the bug is hitting the community particularly hard.

According to the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, there have already been more influenza cases reported this year than at the height of last year's season.

Hospitals around the city are completely full, and ambulances are being forced to deliver patients in rotation so no one facility is overwhelmed. More than 400 cases had been reported by Jan. 7.

But students may have gotten off lucky.

"I don't think we're seeing as much flu here on campus as in previous years because more students and staff are getting vaccinated," says Linda Rizjis, assistant director of the University Health Center.

Because influenza is a virus, it mutates every few years, so doctors must continually monitor for new forms of the illness and develop new vaccines.

"This year's strain [Influenza A] is the same as the previous few years, so the vaccine is closely matched to the virus – meaning that you're better protected by it," Rizjis said.

The Centers for Disease Control estimated that this year's vaccine is 70 to 90 percent effective in preventing the flu. All cases reported locally have been Influenza A.

Rizjis said it wasn't too late to get a flu vaccination for \$8, at the University Health Center.

"Groups of people who are in close contact are at risk and should get vaccinated," Rizjis said. "This can make college students more vulnerable – classes, greek houses, dormitories – one person coughs, and everybody gets it."

Rizjis said students who had been exposed could lessen the blow.

"If you know you've been exposed, and you get to the Health Center within 24 hours," she said, "we've got ways to prevent the flu from setting in or make it less severe."

Most cases of influenza are not severe, but in some cases, they can be lethal. People with extreme symptoms should contact the Health Center or their doctors immediately.

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