

# **Columbia College Student Council**

## **Proposal for an Academic Judicial System**

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**Proposal Drafted by:**

**Rohit Dixit**

**Michael Novielli**

**Seth Caffrey**

**Colleen Hsia**

**Charles Donohoe**

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To the Deans of Columbia College:

The Columbia College Student Council, hereafter referred to as the CCSC , has observed that the Columbia College community presently lacks an Academic Judicial Committee, or a standardized protocol to follow in cases of academic dishonesty. The current system, known as Dean's Discipline for Academic Offenses, lacks student involvement and faculty input. The CCSC believes that causes of academic dishonesty might include:

- a. The stress of academic work at Columbia College,
- b. Misunderstanding as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, and
- c. Lack of consistent enforcement.

To that end, the CCSC believes that involving students and faculty is integral to establishing a more equitable, informative, and judicial system for matters of academic dishonesty at Columbia College.

The following proposal outlines the steps that would be necessary to institute an Academic Judicial Committee, hereafter referred to as the Committee , whereby students could provide important perspectives in a process that has traditionally involved only administrators, and faculty members could contribute a scholarly understanding of academic dishonesty.

This proposal also aims to ensure the rights of the accused student, who should be provided the opportunity to defend himself or herself adequately against such a serious charge, and suggest practical ways to educate the undergraduate community regarding the impact of academic dishonesty upon our institution.

The opinions of the entire Columbia College student body were solicited in this matter. As a result, the CCSC believes that the steps proposed are not only reasonable, but also essential. Along with our proposal, CCSC gladly offers any assistance necessary in order to implement the plans.

The CCSC sincerely hopes that the administration will play a larger role in addressing the problem of academic dishonesty within the undergraduate community, which first requires an acknowledgment of the problem of academic dishonesty. Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you in realizing this Academic Judicial System.

Sincerely,

Rohit Dixit  
Vice President , Class of 2004  
Columbia College Student Council

Michael J. Novielli  
President  
Columbia College Student Council

## **Section I: Academic Dean's Discipline and Proposed Changes**

Although the current system of Dean's Discipline for Academic Offenses is intended to allow the Student Affairs staff to handle issues of academic dishonesty, the CCSC believes that students and faculty should have a direct role in such a procedure.

### **Recommendations:**

CCSC recommends replacing Dean's Discipline for Academic Offenses with an Academic Judicial Committee. The Committee will consist of seven members, three of whom should be undergraduate students, and the remaining four should be non-students. CCSC requests the inclusion of at least one faculty member as part of the four non-students on the Committee. CCSC, however, also realizes that faculty opinion cannot be determined and thus makes this request with the hope of faculty participation. All members of the Academic Judicial Committee will be required to maintain strict confidentiality so that the proceedings of the Academic Judicial Committee maintain their integrity. The Dean of Student Affairs will ultimately approve the three students and select the four non-student members.

If this proposal is adopted, the Academic Judicial Committee will perform the following tasks:

- a. The Committee will replace Dean's Discipline for academic offenses only; other infractions will continue to be adjudicated under the systems currently in place.
- b. The Committee will have the authority to adjudicate matters of academic dishonesty; members of the Committee will have an equal vote, and a majority is needed to make a decision.
- c. A student found guilty of academic dishonesty by the Committee may appeal the decision to the Dean of Columbia College.
- d. The Chair of the Committee, the Dean of Student Affairs, will preside over the Committee, and organize the pre-hearing procedures and the hearing itself.
- e. The Chair of the Committee will also have the power to request and subpoena any student, faculty member, or administrator to serve as a witness, if needed.
- f. The Chair may excuse a member of the Committee if that member has/had a relationship of any kind with the accused student. This decision must be affirmed by a majority vote of the members. An alternate member of the same status (student, dean, or faculty member) will be appointed in his or her place.
- g. The Committee will only hear those cases of academic dishonesty involving Columbia College students. If a Columbia College student is accused of academic dishonesty in a Barnard course, he or she must be referred to the Academic Judicial System of Columbia. Similarly, a Barnard student accused of academic dishonesty in a class at Columbia shall be referred to Barnard's academic judicial system.

## **Section II. Selection Process**

The selection of students to the Committee is an important and serious responsibility. The CCSC will establish a rigorous application and interview process. Our recommendations for the students who are to serve on this Committee will be sent to the Dean of Student Affairs for approval. The CCSC will then recommend more than three students to the Dean's office so that alternate students may substitute for any student Committee member who may be acquainted with the accused student.

## **Section III. Statute of Limitations**

The CCSC recommends that only faculty members may bring an accusation against a student while that student is an undergraduate at Columbia College. Once the student has graduated, any accusations of academic dishonesty may not be considered.

## **Section IV. Assured Rights**

The CCSC believes that the current system of Dean's Discipline for Academic Offenses also inhibits the rights of the accused student. It is recommended that the following rights be guaranteed to the accused student in order to make the adjudication procedure as fair and efficient as possible. The accused student will have:

- a. The right to know the faculty member and/or student witnesses who have brought the charge against him or her.
- b. The right to an advocate (whether a fellow student, a faculty member, or a dean) during the hearing; this member of the community will be able to advise the student during the hearing.
- c. The right to a Procedural Adviser who will be present throughout the hearing process in order to advise the student in matters concerning Committee procedures during the hearing. The Procedural Adviser should not have a personal connection to the accused, and should be a Dean or faculty member who is well versed in the procedure of the proposed system.
- d. The right to review all documents and pieces of evidence before the hearing.
- e. The right to bring non-redundant witnesses to the hearing.
- f. The right to examine other witnesses during the hearing.
- g. The right to testify during the hearing.
- h. The right to present evidence and question the validity of evidence during the hearing.
- i. The right, in the event of a conviction, to obtain a summary of the Committee's findings and conclusion (Note: Although this summary will include the numerical vote of the Committee members voted, it will not include the names of who voted for or against the accused).
- j. The right to appeal to the Dean of Columbia College.
- k. The right to be informed personally of the hearing at least ten days prior to the proceeding

In addition the accused student should NOT have:

- a. The right to have legal counsel present at the hearing.
- b. The right to remain silent during the hearing; he or she must, at the very least, accept or deny the charge of academic dishonesty.

## **Section V. Decisions**

The CCSC recommends that the following procedure should be followed regarding the decisions made by the Committee:

- a. If the accused student is found not guilty or guilty of academic dishonesty, all mention of students, faculty and administrators names will be expunged from the records of the proceedings. All administrative records of the proceeding will, however, be kept in perpetuity.
- b. If the accused student is found guilty of academic dishonesty, the Honor Committee will have a private meeting to decide the punishment. The punishment may include, but is not limited to, a lowering of the student's grade, a requirement to drop the class, suspension, or expulsion. The selected punishment will be left to the discretion of the Academic Judicial Committee.

The CCSC recommends that counseling and other forms of mediation be provided to those students who have been found guilty.

## **Section VI. Awareness**

A school community depends heavily on its academic integrity. Any work produced under false circumstances diminishes the value of the work itself and the community in which it was produced. Therefore, the CCSC strongly recommends greater efforts to emphasize the importance of academic integrity at Columbia.

The CCSC proposes that information about academic dishonesty and the Academic Judicial Committee be disseminated through pamphlets, the Office of Student Affairs, Class Centers, the Columbia College website, a more prominent section in FACETS, emails to the student body, programming during the New Student Orientation Program, and throughout the year in conjunction with Residential Life Staff.