

Student Fairness Committee
2012/2013 Year-End Committee Report to the Academic Senate

Chair: Matthew Masucci
 Chair Elect: Aaron Lington (Fall)/Matthew Masucci (Spring)
 Number of meetings held: 13

SFC Business Completed in 2012/2013
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The Student Fairness Committee (SFC) met 13 times during the 2012/2013 academic year; 6 meetings in the Fall and 7 meetings in the Spring. The agendas and minutes summarizing the case dispositions are included with this report.

Due to a lack of student participation on the committee in 2011/2012, an unprecedented 5 cases were carried over to the 2012/2013 academic year. In addition to the carry over, the SFC received 25 new cases, significantly more than the previous 4 years.

2012/2013	25
2011/2012	15
2010/2011	5
2009/2010	7
2008/2009	10

In 2012/2013, the SFC heard 15 formal complaints. In addition, 5 cases were dismissed, 1 was withdrawn by the student, and 9 will be carried over to 2013/2014.

Student Fairness Case Detail

1112-002	Grade Dispute	Anthropology/ANTH 299/Spring 2011 SFC concludes that there is no evidence of unfair, late, or biased imposition of requirements that may have impacted either the thesis project or the final evaluation of it. Request for a change of grade is denied.
1112-004	Grade Dispute	Library & Information Science/LIBR 240/Spring 2011 SFC concludes that the grade change request is justified due to the fact that the details of the assignment submission and grading policy were not stated in the course greensheet/syllabus.
1112-005	Grievance	Art/Glass Blowing Program/Spring 2011 SFC concludes that there is the appearance of inequity in authorized access to use of the glass kilns and the allocation of studio space and recommends that the department revisit or create appropriate policies regarding authorization, use, and allocation.

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1112-009	Grade Dispute	<p>Music/MUS 4B/Spring 2011 SFC concludes that there is no evidence of unfairness in the instructor's grading but recommends that he improve the clarity and accuracy of the listed grading activities on his greensheet/syllabus and provide an estimate of the timing and frequency of the graded activities in his course.</p>
1112-014	Grade Dispute	<p>Sociology/SOC 200A/Fall 2011 SFC concludes that due to problems with the administration of the final, the student should be given the opportunity to retake the exam.</p>
1213-001	Grade Dispute	<p>Art/ANI 113A/Fall 2011 SFC denied change of grade request but recommended that the department develop a clearly articulated process to deal with complaints at the department level to be made available by October 1, 2013.</p>
1213-002	Grievance	<p>Housing/Fall 2011 Dismissed by SFC based on additional information provided by the department.</p>
1213-003	Grade Dispute	<p>Social Science/SOCS 177/Fall 2011 SFC recommends a grade change from a D to a C and that the course greensheet /syllabus include, as stated in SJSU policy (F06-2), a statement of how the instructor will determine letter grades for the course, including +/- grades if used, as well as the criteria considered in the instructor's "holistic evaluation". It should be noted that attendance should not be used as criteria for grading (F69-24). Additionally, notice of significant changes to class requirements should be made available in class, on Canvas, and via e-mail. Faculty response to grade requests and/or the explanation of grade calculations should be timely in accordance with university policy (F68-18).</p>
1213-004	Grade Dispute	<p>Biological Sciences/MICRO 101/Fall 2011 SFC concludes that the grade should not be changed but that the department should develop a clearly articulated process to deal with complaints at the department level to be made available by October 1, 2013.</p>
1213-005	Grade Dispute	<p>Music and Dance/MUS 158/Fall 2011 The SFC concludes that the grade should not be changed but</p>

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		that the department should develop a clearly articulated process to deal with complaints at the department level to be made available by October 1, 2013.
1213-006	Grade Dispute	Biological Sciences/BIO 124/Fall 2011 The SFC concludes that there is not enough information to recommend a change of grade.
1213-007	Grade Dispute	Biological Sciences/BIO 125/Fall 2011 The SFC concludes that there is not enough information to recommend a change of grade.
1213-008	Grade Dispute	Biological Sciences/BIO 230/Spring 2012 SFC recommends a recalculation of the grade as defined by the syllabus. Additionally, it is recommended that the department develop a clearly articulated process to deal with complaints at the department level to be made available by October 1, 2013.
1213-009	Grade Dispute	Marketing/BUS 131B/Spring 2012 Denied change of grade request as well as the request to retake the final exam. However, the SFC recommends that the course greensheet/syllabus be revised to meet university requirements and that the instructor comply with FERPA requirements regarding the confidentiality of student academic records.
1213-010	Grade Dispute	Marketing/BUS 134C/Spring 2012 Denied change of grade request. However, the SFC recommends that the course greensheet/syllabus be revised to meet university requirements and that the instructor comply with FERPA requirements regarding the confidentiality of student academic records.
1213-012	Grade Dispute	Math/MATH 30P/Spring 2012 Dismissed based on additional information provided by the instructor.
1213-013	Grievance	Health Science/HS 100W/Summer 2012 The SFC concluded that the appropriate transcript notation for this course is a "W" and that the student is not entitled to a refund. The SFC does not address issues of professional behavior and, therefore, encouraged the student to contact the Department Chair and/or Associate Dean regarding her experience.

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1213-015	Grievance	Nutrition/NUFS 114A/Spring 2012 Dismissed based on additional information obtained by the subcommittee during their investigation.
1213-018	Grievance	Special Education Credential/EDSE 217A/Spring 2013 Dismissed based on non-response from the student to a request for additional information.
1213-019	Grade Dispute	Journalism/MCOM 111/Fall 2012 Petition denied by the SFC.
1213-022	Grade Dispute	Marketing/BUS 130/Fall 2012 Petition withdrawn by the student prior to assignment to a subcommittee.

Unfinished Business Items for 2012/2013

As previously stated, 9 cases have been carried over from 2012/2013 for resolution in 2013/2014. The issue of how to increase/incentivize student participation remains a significant concern for the members of this committee as the SFC is the only formal recourse for student grade disputes/grievances and the only Senate committee that cannot operate without student participation.

The Senate has approved the following changes to the committee membership for 2013/2014 in an effort to clear the SFC case load:

- Ten students and ten faculty members will be appointed to the SFC
- The Associate Vice Chair of the Committee on Committees will contact the *Ombudsperson* within 3 days after the Executive Committee approves the conditional appointment
- The SFC Chair and the Ombudsperson will give a status report to the full Senate at the Dec 2013 and March 2014 meetings

While the committee is hopeful that these changes will assist in clearing the current backlog of cases, the issue of student participation has not been fully addressed. The SFC believes strongly that student participation should be incentivized through priority registration. Although the university has taken measures to limit access to priority registration, the SFC believes this is a reasonable request as it would involve only 7-10 students each semester.

Policy Concerns Identified in 2012/2013

- **S07-6 Student Fairness Dispute Resolution**

"Informal discussion between persons directly involved in the dispute is essential in the early stages of the resolution process and shall be encouraged at all stages."

"A student involved in a dispute must first attempt to resolve the matter with the other party. If an agreement is not reached, the student should seek the aid of the University Ombudsman or the immediate supervisor of the other party. Students may seek the counsel of the Ombudsman before speaking with parties directly involved in the conflict. If this informal process fails to resolve the matter, the following procedures are to be followed:

Petitions shall be filed with the SFC through the University Ombudsman office. The University Ombudsman will assist the student in the completion of the petition."

The committee recommends that the SFC policy be revised to clearly articulate the actions required at the department level before a case is forwarded to the SFC for consideration. The committee offers the College of Education policy as an example (<http://www.sjsu.edu/education/docs/StudentDisputes.pdf>).

- **F68-18 Student Rights to Timely Explanation of Grades**

"Every student has the right to know, within reasonable time, his academic test scores, to review his papers and examinations, and to be provided with an explanation of the determination of his course grade."

It is suggested that this policy be updated to address the timeliness of feedback related to all learning activities including, i.e., presentations, online discussions, group projects, fieldwork experiences, student teaching assignments, etc.

- **S07-2 Academic Integrity**

"The handling of student conduct code violations should be separated from the processes handling student disputes with other members of the university community. Specifically, grades resulting from cheating are not a matter of student fairness. Therefore the Office of the Ombudsman and the Student Fairness Committee should be removed from the student conduct processes regarding academic misconduct."

Issues of Academic Integrity are to be separate from the Student Fairness Process. Therefore, a policy, either Academic Integrity, Student Fairness (S06-7), or Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility (S99-8, S99-9), must articulate the course of action to be taken to challenge a grade when the result of the Student Conduct investigation is a case dismissal or a finding of *not responsible*.

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- **The Board of Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility (BAFPR) Modification (S99-9)**

"Allegations of professional misconduct by a faculty member are made in one of the following administrative offices..."

This requires clarification as some departments/offices interpret the language as "*allegations* by a faculty member" while others interpret it as "*misconduct* by a faculty member".

The SJSU policies most often involved in SFC petitions are those pertaining to greensheet/syllabus requirements (F06-2), the distinction between participation and attendance as it relates to grading (F69-24), the specific grading scale in CR/NC courses including a clear definition of the requirements for "passing" (S09-7), and the provision of a timely explanation when students request clarification regarding how their course grade was determined (F68-18). The SFC suggests that these topics/issues and the related university policies be addressed by department Chairs with all faculty early in the Fall semester.

New Business for 2013/2014

The SFC will begin the Fall 2013 semester with no students appointed to the committee and possibly 2 students returning. All 10 seats must be filled early in the semester so that the committee can address the carried over cases and at least one student must be appointed before September 4 in order to conduct business at the September 4, 2013 meeting, the first scheduled meeting of the year.

The SFC will propose substantive changes to the existing SFC policy including a name change.