

# Annual Report of the Undergraduate Studies Committee

Submitted to Faculty Council June 2020

## Chairperson:

Joseph Previte (SCI)

## Members:

BC Kim (BUS)

Erin Dick (HSS)

Paul Lynch (ENG)

Sam Nutile (SCI)

Dan Schank (HSS)

Jeffery Coy (BUS)

Richard Zhao (ENG)

Ruth Pflueger, ex officio

Bailey Rollage, SGA Secretary

## Standing Charges:

Charge #1: Review and recommend teaching and advising award recipients.

The committee selected Shariffah Dawood (Teaching Award) and Olena Surzhko-Harned (Advising Award) in April 2020.

Nominations were accepted via the internet with help from the Chancellor's Office.

Our committee distributed the announcements via email (through the Chancellor's Office) and on public computer kiosks.

## Ad hoc charges:

Charge #2 Continue to advise faculty and staff on general education requirements in concert with the ACPC (Academic and Career Planning Center)

Jeffrey Coy and Richard Zhao looked into advising faculty on the new Gen Ed requirements. They met with ACPC and also the Behrend Academic Advising Committee in October. They suggested appointing a person in each school who is knowledgeable of Gen Ed requirements. Jeff Coy and Joe Previte also met with Terri Mando from ACPC in December. Several ideas discussed included automating the advising form created by Glenn Kumhera and appointing a representative from this committee to the Behrend Academic Advising Committee to improve communication between the two committees.

Charge #3: Work with SGA to advise students on how to handle grievances against faculty.

Paul Lynch, Sam Nutile, and Bailey Rollage worked on this charge. On Friday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, the subcommittee met with Safinaz Elhadary from SGA and got their feedback and input on exactly what SGA was looking for (as a resolution) for filing grievances against faculty.

The notes from the meeting are as follows:

### **What are the students asking from the Undergraduate Studies Committee?**

The students want a standardized grievance process (for Behrend College-standard across all schools) to be able to report problems with faculty via an online (anonymous) form submission. The form submission would either go to the respective Associate School Director or Department Chair or both of these parties.

### **Why an Online form Submission?**

Bailey and Safinaz felt like students would feel less anxious about bringing up a concern regarding a faculty member if it was an online form. Students may be deterred from reporting a significant problem if they have to first appear in person to the faculty, department chair, associate school director, or school director.

### **Where should this form be made available to students?**

There was some discussion by Bailey and Safinaz of where a link to such form should be posted (in CANVAS or as a link from the main Behrend webpage (a standard form for all of Behrend College)).

### **What are some of the issues students have raised to SGA that they feel they would utilize this online form for?**

This all stems from the issue of not getting grades back in time and also for grades not being displayed in CANVAS. An example was given by Bailey of a student going an entire semester thinking he/she was doing well in a course (not getting grades/ feedback from the instructor) only to find out they would fail the course in the end. A second example was given by Bailey of assignments being given back paper copy with a grade but there are no grade entries in CANVAS for the students to see and track their progress. The students are accustomed to seeing their grades in CANVAS - Bailey and Safinaz (speaking on behalf of the students) feel all faculty should be putting their grades in CANVAS for students to see their up to date progress.

On Tuesday, October 22nd: The subcommittee went over the summary report (from the meeting with the SGA representatives) at the Undergraduate Studies Committee meeting with all the Committee members that were present at the meeting. Some discussion was had about possible resolutions and potential issues with students not giving enough information when filing a grievance.

Overall, the committee made a good faith effort to understand SGA's concerns, but feel that a new grievance policy would be problematic.

Charge #4: Develop a statement of good writing (ad-hoc with English faculty).

Dan Schank and Erin Dick had correspondence with Massimo Verzella in the English program about this charge. Massimo drafted a short text and reached out to our English faculty accordingly. Dan responded with some suggestions, as did Dr. Champagne. It's likely that other faculty members weighed in as well (and didn't hit "reply all"). Being that this task is part of some larger questions being addressed by the English program, the final version has yet to be determined. Dan and Erin were also awaiting feedback from other departments with discipline-specific suggestions as well.

Lastly, the full committee had a hard time grappling with an overarching statement dictating 'good-writing' college wide. We suggest an advisory document that comes from the English program and is adopted by that program.

Charge #5: (Ad-hoc with ACPC Director). Develop guidelines for quality advising. Develop and/or streamline faculty involvement in advising training. Investigate alternative models of advising and make recommendations to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

This charge overlapped with the second charge. Joe Previte and Jeffrey Coy met with the ACPC Director in December and suggestions we made (see Charge #2).

Charge #6 (Ad-hoc with Student Life Committee, Office of Student Affairs, and ACPC). Evaluate first year seminar across campus. Develop model syllabus.

Ruth Pflueger and BC Kim worked on this charge. They generated a report that details their actions and findings, linked here:  
<https://tinyurl.com/yaksmvqy>

They also attempted to coordinate with members from the Student Life committee on this charge, but were not able to meet due to COVID-19.

Lastly, the full committee again had issues with developing a 'one size fits all' model syllabus, as many Behrend FYS are very different and distinct in nature from program to program.

## Suggested 2020-21 Charges:

Charge #1: Review and recommend teaching and advising award recipients.

Charge #2: Continue to advise faculty and staff on the implementation of the new general education curriculum.

Charge #3: Continue coordinating with ACPC regarding issues of advising. Possibly appoint a representative from Undergraduate Studies to the Behrend Academic Advising Committee.

Charge #4: Continue work on evaluating Behrend's First Year Seminars and make recommendations as needed.

Respectfully submitted for the Committee,  
Joseph P. Previte  
Chair of Undergraduate Studies