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Professional Behavior

An Informal Summary of University Policies, Procedures, and Resources for Undergraduate Instruction

Professional Behavior

Faculty, in their teaching role, should understand and keep in mind the very special nature of the university and their rights and responsibilities as members of that institution.

Faculty Code of Conduct

The Faculty Code of Conduct, as approved by the Assembly of the Academic Senate, appears in full in The Manual of the Los Angeles Division of the Academic Senate. The parts of the Code that deal with teaching (APM 015 Section II) are reproduced here:

Ethical Principles

As teachers, the professor encourages the free pursuit of learning in students. They hold before them the best scholarly standards of the discipline. Professors demonstrate respect for the student as an individual, and adheres to the proper role as intellectual guide and counselors. Professors make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and to assure that the evaluations of students reflect their true merit. They respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student. They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They acknowledge significant academic or scholarly assistance from them. They protect their academic freedom. (1966 Statement on Professional Ethics, issued by the American Association of University Professors, revised 1987).

Types of unacceptable conduct:

1. Failure to meet the responsibilities of instruction, including:
 - (a) arbitrary denial of access to instruction;
 - (b) significant intrusion of material unrelated to the course;

(c) significant failure to adhere, without legitimate reason, to the rules of the faculty in the conduct of courses, to meet class, to keep office hours, or to hold examinations as scheduled;

(d) evaluation of student work by criteria not directly reflective of course performance;

(e) undue and unexcused delay in evaluating student work.

2. Discrimination against a student on political grounds, or for reasons of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, national origin, ancestry, marital status, medical condition (Medical condition, according to the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, means “health impairment related to or associated with a diagnosis, for which a person has been rehabilitated or cured.”), status as a Vietnam-era veteran or disabled veteran, or, within the limits imposed by law or University regulations, because of age or citizenship or for other arbitrary or personal reasons.

3. Knowing violation of the University policy, including the pertinent guidelines, applying to nondiscrimination against students on the basis of handicap.

4. Use of the position or powers of a faculty member to coerce the judgment or conscience of a student or to cause harm to a student for arbitrary or personal reasons.

5. Participating in or deliberately abetting disruption, interference, or intimidation in the classroom.

Procedures for disputes and complaints against faculty

The informal procedure for resolving disputes between faculty and students is through the Campus Ombuds Office. The Ombudsperson can advise the parties on grievance procedures, investigate, help identify, and evaluate options for resolution, or act as a neutral mediator in an effort to resolve the issue (see below).

The formal procedure, if a student or other member of the community maintains that a faculty member has violated the Faculty Code of Conduct, is to follow the grievance procedure: the student first attempts to resolve the issue by going to the Chairperson of the department, next the Dean of the School or College, and then the Vice Chancellor for Faculty Relations in that order, if necessary. After exhausting these channels, the student may take his or her grievance to the Academic Senate for review.

The Charges Committee of the Academic Senate reviews charges of violation of University policy brought against faculty by any member of the campus as well as the general community. Matters brought to the attention of this committee can sometimes be resolved informally. Any individual may consult privately with the Chair, or with a member designated by the Chair to bring about the informal disposition. All discussions are held in strict confidence. If the Charges Committee, after a factual investigation, makes a finding of probable cause, the matter is referred to the Committee on Privilege and Tenure. In such a case where probable cause has been found to exist, the Committee on Privilege and Tenure may conduct a formal hearing. It then reports its findings and recommended sanctions (if any) to the Chancellor. The Senate recommendations are also sent to the parties involved in the case and to the Chairs of the

University and Divisional committees on Privilege and Tenure. The permissible disciplinary sanctions are written censure, suspension (other than interim suspension with pay), demotion (in rank or in salary step), and dismissal from the employ of the University.

The Committee on Privilege and Tenure also inquires into grievances brought to it by Academic Senate members regarding administrative actions affecting them. The Chair of this Committee or the Chair of the Privilege and Tenure Grievance Committee can direct faculty members to the appropriate committee for matters of misconduct or grievance (Academic Senate Office; ext. 53851).

Student Code of Conduct

Underlying UCLA's educational goals are basic values that everyone at the University must respect, if UCLA is to function as a community of learners. These goals include intellectual honesty, mutual respect for the individual's right to freedom of thought, belief, and expression; freedom of inquiry; freedom from discrimination on the basis of any arbitrary or personal reasons; and the abhorrence of intimidation, harassment, disruption, or violence aimed at limiting these freedoms or interfering with a student, faculty, or staff member's performance of his or her University activities.

In particular, students are expected to abide by specific conduct regulations (found in the Dean of Students' Office, the Office of Residential Life, the Center for Student Programming, and other Student Affairs offices; available on-line at www.saonet.ucla.edu/sci under "Official Documented Guidelines"). Violations may result in sanctions ranging from a written warning up to dismissal from UCLA and may include mandatory community service work and participation in remedial educational programs. While it is impossible to list all possible violations, the following types of behavior, or attempted behaviors, are provided as examples of prohibited student conduct:

1. Dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of prohibited student conduct. Cheating includes such behaviors as fabricating lab data, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, submitting the same paper in more than one course without permission, having someone else take the student's exam, or plagiarizing a paper. (For more specific information on preventing and confronting academic dishonesty, see the preceding section on "Academic Dishonesty.")
2. Forgery, alteration, or misuse of University documents, records, keys, or identifications. For example, forging an instructor's signature on a "Permission to Enroll" slip is a violation of this policy.
3. Theft of, conversion of, or damage to any property of the University or property of others while on University premises. For instance, shoplifting from the UCLA Store is a violation of this policy.
4. Unauthorized entry to or use of University properties, equipment, or resources. A student who went into an instructor's desk and removed an exam without the instructor's permission would have violated this policy.

5. Obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary procedures, or any other University activity. For example, a student's continued outbursts in the classroom or a student group's blocking the entrances to a classroom would be violations of this policy.

6. Physical abuse, threats of violence, or conduct that threatens the health or safety of any person on University property or in connection with official University functions. Rape and acquaintance rape are violations of this policy, as are credible threats made to an instructor by a student.

7. The use of "fighting words" by students to harass any person or persons on University property, on other property to which these policies apply as defined by campus implementing regulations, or in connection with official University functions or University-sponsored programs. According to the University-wide Policy on Student Harassment, "fighting words" are those personally abusive epithets which, when directly addressed to any ordinary person, are, in the context used and as a matter of common knowledge, inherently likely to provoke violence whether or not they actually do so. Such words include, but are not limited to, those terms widely recognized to be derogatory reference to race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, and other personal characteristics. 'Fighting words' constitute harassment when the circumstances of their utterance create a hostile and intimidating environment which the student uttering them should reasonably know will interfere with the victim's ability to pursue effectively his or her education or otherwise to participate fully in University programs and activities."

8. Actual or attempted use, possession, sale, distribution, or manufacture of controlled substances identified in Federal or State law or regulations, except as expressly permitted by law, or of illegally obtained controlled substances on University properties or at official University functions. This includes the actual or attempted use, possession, sale, distribution, or manufacture of alcohol on University properties or at official University functions that is unlawful or otherwise prohibited by University policy or campus regulations.

Procedures for grievance against students

Faculty members may find it necessary to use formal University channels for handling alleged violations of the Student Conduct Code. The instructor begins the process by submitting a written account of the alleged violation to the Dean of Students. From this point, the Dean of Students will deal with the student directly. The proceedings that follow involve a hearing either by the Student Conduct Committee or an assigned Hearing Officer. The UCLA Student Conduct Code of Procedures, which is available in the Dean of Students Office, outlines this process.

The student will be notified in writing of the conduct in question, the University policies or campus regulations allegedly violated, and student conduct procedures. A counseling interview will then be conducted by the Dean where the charges are discussed and the student's defense is heard. If the student admits culpability, the Dean may impose one or more of the following sanctions: restitution, warning, censure, loss of privileges and exclusion from University activities, suspension, or dismissal.

If the student does not admit culpability and the evidence against him or her is strong, the case

is referred to the Student Conduct Committee. The Committee consists of two faculty members, one graduate student, one undergraduate student, and a fifth member appointed by the Chancellor from the staff. A hearing is conducted by the Committee or by a Hearing Officer, after which a final report and recommendation of sanction, if any, is submitted by the Student Conduct Committee to the Chancellor. The student may also submit to the Chancellor any written argument or augmentation to the record supporting the student's position. The final decision is made by the Chancellor as to imposition of sanctions or dismissal of charges.

Avoiding sexual liaisons with students

The University Committee on Privilege and Tenure (UCPT) has adopted the following rules concerning sexual liaisons with students:

Faculty members must understand that "romantic" or any kind of socio-sexual liaison with current students can:

- seriously compromise the student-teacher relationship, to which all faculty members have primary professional responsibilities;
- in a course or class environment, seriously impair the educational environment not only for the principles in the relationship but for the faculty member's other students;
- give rise to charges of unacceptable discrimination by the faculty member's other students in regards to grading, references, access to laboratory equipment or other resources and educational opportunities;
- may prejudice the faculty member's defense in the eventuality that sexual harassment or discrimination charges may arise from such a relationship.

UCPT defines "current student" as any student currently enrolled in a faculty member's course or under a faculty member's supervision or direction for research, honors, thesis work, etc. The UCPT "Statement of Position" does not refer to socio-sexual liaisons existing before or established after the faculty-student relationship.

The Campus Ombuds Office

The Ombudsperson is a neutral and independent person who will listen and help with grievances or concerns from all members of the campus community (students, staff, faculty, administration) on a confidential basis. Acting impartially, the Ombudsperson may investigate unresolved grievances or facilitate the resolution of problems for which there are no established guidelines. The Ombudsperson can also make recommendations for review or change, when the policies or practices of the institution are generating conflicts or grievances.

Individuals seeking informal or non-adversarial approaches to resolving conflicts are especially advised to contact the Ombuds Office (1172 Career Center; ext. 57627; www.saonet.ucla.edu/ombuds/). All matters are handled confidentially. No action is taken without the permission of the individuals concerned. The office can provide information regarding the interpretation of university policies and regulations, as well as guidance to individuals who wish to pursue issues on their own. The Ombudsperson can be particularly helpful for those grievances regarding actions that, while they may not constitute a violation of

policy, nonetheless are a cause of distress or difficulty for the parties involved.

The Ombuds office is also a designated Sexual Harassment Information Center for students, staff, and faculty. The office staff is experienced in working with issues such as sexual harassment; insensitivity to matters of race, gender, or sexual orientation; abuse of power; and ethics. In addition to responding to individual situations, the Ombuds office can provide brief workshops and presentations on those topics as well as structuring processes for addressing department-wide conflicts around these issues.

Avoiding complaints

Over the years, the Ombuds Office has observed similarities in the circumstances that lead students to complain formally about faculty members. The great majority of complaints that come to the Ombuds Office could probably be avoided if faculty were aware of behaviors that often lead to such charges. Sensitivity and an emphasis on clear communication are important factors in creating a comfortable classroom situation for students. Because of differences in power, status, and maturity between faculty and students, however, it is very difficult for most students to confront teachers directly about their concerns. Therefore, faculty should be alert to and prepared for the following potential areas for student complaints:

Poor communication

This can take the form of inadequate or nonexistent syllabi, contradictory instructions, or poorly defined expectations. A critically important precaution for avoiding charges is having specific and clear communication with all students about assignments, expectations, and standards.

Perceived unfairness

Equal and consistent treatment is essential to students' feeling that they are being treated fairly. Thus, faculty should avoid any signs of favoritism toward students. Equally inappropriate is belittling students or otherwise subjecting them to ridicule.

It is important to be equally available to all students. Since many UCLA students have jobs, faculty office hours are not always sufficient to meet their needs. Some provision for student contact beyond office hours, such as additional appointments or providing an e-mail address, can make a big difference in accessibility.

Also, recognize that there are sometimes legitimate extenuating circumstances that affect the student's ability to take an exam, show up for class, or meet a deadline. Instructors should be sure that students know their preferences for handling such circumstances. If an instructor requires proof beyond the student's word (e.g., a doctor's note), he or she should let that be known as part of a general policy rather than asking for proof only after a student tells his or her story; students tend to interpret such requests as an expression of disbelief or distrust.

Racial harassment

A common complaint heard from students of color and foreign students is the feeling that they

are singled out in class to serve as a spokesperson for all persons of their race or nationality. Although an instructor may be well-intentioned in creating an environment in which various viewpoints are heard, the targeted student often feels reduced to his or her racial, ethnic, or national identity. Another source of complaints is the use of negative racial or ethnic humor, or stereotypes. Students' perceptions of the meaning of a teacher's comments — especially regarding racial, ethnic, or sexual matters — are often quite different from what the instructor intended.

Sexual harassment

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which all persons who participate in University programs and activities can work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation, including sexual. Specifically, every member of the University community should be aware that the University is strongly opposed to sexual harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by law and by University policy. It is the intention of the University to take whatever action may be needed to prevent, correct, and, if necessary, discipline behavior that violates this policy (Academic Personnel Manual, Section 035-0). Being sensitive to signs of student discomfort in academic, professional, or informal situations may help alert faculty members to the need to clarify a sexually ambiguous situation. Encouraging students to ask questions or meeting with students in groups are options if the instructor is concerned with student perception of his or her intentions.