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RE: Response to Student Conduct Program Review Report

Dear Houston:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to respond to the Review Team's *Report* on the Student Conduct Program (SCP) at Grinnell. I agree with many of the findings and look forward to implementing several of their recommendations. Overall, I agree with their general findings that: a.) we have a sound and well-documented SCP that does not need "fixing"; b.) the SCP is valued by the relatively few students who go through the conduct process; and c.) the student conduct process may be confusing to the larger Grinnell College community who may not have a familiarity with this program. I look forward to working with students, faculty, and staff to "demystify" the student conduct process and to highlight how the SCP attempts to fulfill its mission to "provid[e] a holistic and transformative experience to all students."

I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to address some factual and/or assumptive misperceptions identified in the *Report*:

- The *Report* makes an observation that there is a "perceived lack of transparency in both process and outcomes." It is important to note over the last three years, considerable efforts have been made to provide more clarity and transparency in the student conduct process. To this end, student conduct hearing board members are selected and announced to the entire Grinnell College campus community by the Student Government Association, student conduct statistics (including specific charges, information about how the case was resolved, and educational outcome(s)/sanction(s) recommendations and findings) are posted online at the end of each semester for *all* Grinnell College community members to review, several articles about student conduct reforms (including the publication of conduct statistics) have been printed in the *Scarlet & Black*, and student hearing board members are informed of outcomes after rendering a determination of responsibility and resulting educational outcome(s)/sanction(s) recommendations, if applicable.
- Based on the case resolution time (i.e., less than 30 business days – which is consistent with best practices), and the posting of conduct statistics online, I question the veracity of the claim made in the last bullet of the "observation section" that "timely feedback" was not provided to the complainant where it was alleged that she/he/zi didn't find out until five months *after* the hearing.
- As articulated in the *Student Handbook*, "no contact" orders are rarely issued and, by design, are tailored to each specific situation. If there is a (mis)perception that "no contact" orders are not consistently enforced – it may be because the circumstances of one situation might require a different set of behavioral expectations than another. As for the duration of each order, it is clearly stated on each document that the "no contact order agreement is in effect until revoked by the [assigned hearing board] or the dean of students."
- Throughout comments made the *Report*, it appears that affected parties are, at times, not informed of outcomes. Any educational outcome(s)/sanction(s) that directly affects the complainant (e.g., "no contact orders", suspensions/dismissals) is communicated to the affected parties. Due to federal privacy laws (i.e., FERPA), however, all other information is maintained as confidential.
- While a minor factual error, Grinnell College students serve as "Student Advisers" and not "Community Assistants" as indicated on page two (first bullet).

As for the many recommendations I can foresee implementing to help create positive change on the Grinnell College campus:

- Increase educational efforts aimed at the campus community with regard to judicial proceedings and consequences. *As the dean of students, I will be meeting with student staff (i.e., SAs, HWCs) during their fall training to provide an overview of the student conduct process, as well as to articulate the newly created “Community Standards.” This program will be co-facilitated with a student conduct hearing board member. Among the other possibilities the Review Team recommends that are currently in the planning stages:*
 - Handouts with the core principles of self-governance and a flowchart/description of the Judicial Council (JudCo) and the College Hearing Board (CHB) – *a document that highlights the newly created “Statement of Values” and “Community Standards” – and how each support the concept of self-governance – are being created for the residence halls. In addition, each student will receive a postcard-sized mailer that highlights the community standards and the online Student Handbook before fall classes start.*
 - Townhall meetings – *cluster-wide “open forums” for south, north, and east campus(es) are currently being scheduled with Residence Life Coordinators and Student Staff. These “townhall meetings” will take place shortly after the beginning of each semester and will include student hearing board members.*
 - Consider utilizing Tutorial as an avenue to educate students on the process of the student conduct system and how it relates to self-governance – *preliminary informal conversations with some tutorial faculty for the fall 2011 term have already yielded possible interest in this topic. More formalized discussions with our Academic Affairs colleagues in Nollen House would be needed to make a more systematic, formalized program/offering to tutorial faculty (for the fall 2012 term).*
- Formalize training for faculty, staff and student members of JudCo and CHB. *A formalized training program already exists for student hearing board members. In addition, all board members (students, faculty, staff) receive a comprehensive, 100+ page training manual. An invitation will be sent to faculty and staff board members to see if they are interested and/or willing to participate in this formal training program during the fall 2011 term. As Grinnell College provides a volunteer-based board structure, it is also important to be sensitive of other people’s schedules and availability.*

And, finally, as for the few recommendations I do not consider feasible at this time:

- Posting of report of outcomes on student floors in addition to the S&B. *As these documents average between 6-7 pages for each semester, it would be a rather cumbersome document to read while standing in the hallway. And when you factor in all of the floors on campus and multiply the number of pages that would need to be used, there would be a considerable amount of paper used in this effort. Given the ethos of sustainability among Grinnell College students, I recommend using existing online technologies and directing people to the appropriate web site (perhaps by creating an intentional marketing campaign).*
- Increase the pool of available members. Rotate membership on the boards to increase the number of people who have experience and knowledge of JudCo and CHB. *This practice is already underway. And while we would certainly welcome new members, we have approximately 15 student hearing board members – a sufficient amount given the relatively small number of hearings conducted each year. Note: any significant increase of board members may lead to their underutilization and possible undue frustration.*

Thank you, again, for your assistance in securing and ensuring this process of self-reflection, idea-generation, and feedback-gathering. All of these combined efforts will no doubt improve an already strong student conduct program.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dean of Students