

Committee on Student Life

Annual Report 2015-2016

TO: The Faculty of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering

FROM: Calvin L. Gidney, Andrew Ramsburg, Tafari Ellis Duncan, co-chairs, Committee on Student Life

AY 2015-2016 was a busy year for the Committee on Student life that included initial discussions about a potential restructuring of the committee, hearing of several disciplinary appeals, meetings with members of the Student Senate and Inter-Greek Council, and selection of the Wendell Phillips finalist. Given the high volume of committee work this year, CSL members agreed that we would meet bi-monthly, on the second and fourth Fridays of each month.

Wendell Phillips Award

In the October, 2015 semester, members of the CSL met to select the essay topic for Wendell Phillips applicants. We selected the following two questions:

For the ORAL Response Question

"It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so" – Mark Twain

Pick an idea or concept about which you were confident upon your arrival at Tufts, but which was altered or challenged during your time here. What did you learn in the process of "unlearning"?

For the 1st Round WRITTEN Response:

"Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education." Franklin D. Roosevelt.

You are now among the better educated. Do you agree that education is the true protector of democracy? Whether you answer in the affirmative or not, what does your response say about our understanding and practice of democracy in the 21st century?

These questions were sent to all Wendell Phillips applicants (N=20) who subsequently submitted their materials in digital format for review by the CSL. After the Committee review, we selected four finalists and asked that they prepare a brief speech on the following topic:

“There must be a few times in life when you stand at a precipice of a decision. When you know there will forever be a Before and an After...I knew there would be no turning back if I designated this moment as my own Prime Meridian from which everything else would be measured.”
— Justina Chen, North of Beautiful

Discuss a situation, either personal or public, which represents a “Prime Meridian” for either you, for others, or for all of us.

Members of the committee meet on March 16, 2016 to hear the Wendell-Phillips finalist give their presentations, an event that was open to the entire Tufts community. There were some 50 people in attendance at this presentation. After the presentation, the Committee deliberated for an additional hour and selected the Wendell Phillips finalist.

Disciplinary Appeals and Hearings

- (1) Throughout AY 2015-2016 the CSL co-chairs served as an initial screen for potential appeals, vetting each potential case and arriving at an initial decision about whether the appeal should proceed to the full committee for a formal appeal.
- (2) On September 25, 2015 the CSL heard a disciplinary appeal based on *severity of consequence*. The case concerned the disciplinary action that resulted from the occupation of President Monaco’s office in the Spring 2015 semester. The Committee voted to uphold the Dean’s disciplinary action of Probation II.
- (3) On December 11, 2015, the CSL heard a disciplinary appeal of a decision by the Inter-Greek Council from a student organization based on *new evidence* and *denial of fair process*. The organization claimed that the IGC had not followed the procedures outlined in its bylaws. Additionally, the organization claimed that it had new evidence that warranted reconsideration of the disciplinary outcome. After the hearing and the committee discussion, the CSL found in favor of the organization and found that there was denial of fair process. The CSL did not find sufficient grounds based on new evidence.
- (4) On December 11, 2015, the CSL heard an appeal based on *denial of fair process* by a student organization of the decision by the Tufts Community Union Judiciary (TCUJ) to deny the group official recognition. After the hearing and committee discussion, the CSL voted in favor of the student organization and found that the TCUJ had denied them a fair hearing.
- (5) On 22 April 2016, the Committee for Student Life (CSL) convened an official inquiry to consider events leading up to, and extending from, a drug-related incident that occurred at a fraternity on 25-26 March 2016. The inquiry included presentations

from the fraternity members – including members of its executive board – fraternity members present at the time of the incident, and members of the Tufts University Police Department present at the incident.

The CSL found the Chapter responsible for the incident and imposed disciplinary probation on the Chapter until the end of AY 2017. Furthermore, the CSL made a set of recommendations to the Dean of Student Affairs and to the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life.

Interactions with Other University Organizations

During AY 2015/2016, the CSL meet with several campus organizations in an effort to work more effectively with them. In the Fall, we met with members of the Inter-Greek Council and the Tufts Interfraternity Council (IFC). Members of the CSL attended a president's council luncheon at the invitation of the IFC.

In the Spring semester, the CSL met with members of the Tufts Community Union (TCU) and the Tufts Community Union Judiciary (TCUJ).

Our goal in meeting with these student organizations is to ensure that there are shared understandings of how the CSL operates with respect to these constituencies and to prevent any differences of interpretation that might arise from the appeals process.

Discussion of Committee Structure Reorganization

Upon request of the University Executive Committee, the CSL began a series of discussions about the possibility of reconfiguring the CSL into two committees: one that handles appeals and original cases pertaining to groups and one focused on proactively considering relevant aspects of student life. While preliminary, the CSL membership endorsed the concept of forming two committees, with an aim at better defining the role of the committee in advocating student concerns, while maintaining reasonable faculty workload. Next year the CSL hopes to rejoin this conversation and will then consider whether or not a formal proposal should be developed.

Future Business

In addition to the typical responsibilities of the CSL, in AY 2016-2017, the Committee will continue its discussions about possible restructuring of the CSL. Among the topics for continued discussion and deliberation:

2. What are the ways in which the CSL is proactively and reactively addressing issues on campus? How can these be improved?

4. To what extent should the CSL have interaction with and input into other aspects of student life such as accessibility services, study abroad, and residential life?

5. If the role of the CSL grows separately from the judicial piece of the committee, what additional resources may the committee require (if any)??