Summary of SU’s Current Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures

The Policy, established in 2006 and most recently revised in 2011, sets expectations for the integrity of students' academic work and processes for handling alleged violations through the Academic Integrity Office (AIO). The AIO was created under the Policy to work in collaboration with the Academic Integrity Coordinators (AICs) appointed in each school and college. The AIO keeps records of all cases.

Violations of the policy include plagiarism and failure to cite sources, inappropriate collaboration on academic work, misrepresentation of academic work, dishonest communication about academic work, and any other dishonest activity in the course of academic pursuits.

The Policy distinguishes two types of violations, "academic dishonesty" or knowingly violating the Policy, and "academic negligence" or violating the Policy unintentionally.

- Faculty must make this distinction before filing a new case, whether or not they have met with the student or have adequate information about the circumstances.
- Many students whose cases go to hearing argue unsuccessfully that they were negligent despite evidence that they knew they were violating Policy.

The vast majority of cases are filed by faculty or instructors, who submit reports using an online tool in MySlice. (Students and staff may report suspected cases to the AIO or to the school/college AIC.) As part of the initial report, the instructor proposes a penalty, which may range from a written warning in a case of minor negligence to course failure and/or suspension or expulsion in the most serious cases.

After an instructor reports a suspected case, the AIO works with the relevant AIC to ensure that necessary evidence is collected before emailing official notice of the case, with the evidence, to the student, instructor, AIC, and Academic Integrity Advisor (AIA).

An undergraduate student charged for the first time may accept the violation and proposed penalty or may appeal by submitting a Student Hearing Statement within seven business days. All graduate students and undergraduate students facing a second or third charge are required to have their cases heard by a hearing panel consisting of an equal number of faculty and students and one administrator affiliated with the school or college where the alleged violation occurred. (In the case of second and third violation, the hearing panel is not informed that the student has a prior violation on record until and unless the new violation is upheld.)

Over the past three years, the number of academic integrity cases reported ranged from 220 to 270, far higher than the previous range of 130 to 165 cases between 2006-07 and 2011-12.*

*The proportion of cases that are appealed and ultimately overturned due to insufficient evidence has remained under five percent of all cases filed annually since 2006.
The rising caseload likely reflects growing faculty familiarity with the university-wide Policy, instituted in 2006.

- But the growing caseload also creates significant challenges, particularly the corresponding rise in the number of hearings, from between 15 and 30 before 2011-12 to between 55 and 70 since.
- Preparing for and holding hearings drains significant resources from schools and colleges as well as the AIO in terms of staff, faculty, administrator and student time.
- Difficulty coordinating the scheduling of hearings lengthens the time students facing an AI charge must wait to learn its resolution.
- And hearings can be stressful and intimidating for students rather than significant learning experiences.

The Policy establishes presumptive penalties: course failure with temporary transcript notation for a first violation by an undergraduate student; and suspension or expulsion for a graduate student or for an undergraduate found in violation for a second or third time.

- In two thirds of recent cases, however, students receive a lesser sanction rather than the applicable presumptive penalty, indicating that acceptance of presumptive penalties is limited. (Fewer than five percent of students have been suspended or expelled in recent years.)
- The AIO and AICs receive frequent anecdotal reports of faculty reluctance to report AI cases based on concern that reporting takes too much time and effort and that the one-size fits all cases approach inherent in the presumptive penalties is overly harsh and ignores the educational goals of AI Policy.

Once a hearing panel concludes that a violation has occurred, any course-related penalties the panel members select are final and not subject to further appeal. Course-related penalties include grade reductions on assignments and exams and reductions in final course grades, including course failure with temporary or permanent transcript notation. Students found in violation of the Policy are directed to complete an online educational seminar administered by the AIO.

Panel votes in favor of suspension or expulsion must be reviewed by the Associate Provost for Academic Programs, who may only reduce sanctions she or he deems to be "grossly disproportionate" to the violation. The Associate Provost reviews written materials in such cases. No further hearing is conducted. Decisions by the Associate Provost are final and not subject to appeal.