



# CASE STUDIES

2021 EDITION

Nothing highlights the dean's role as problem solver more than case studies. From a number of submissions, we have assembled a set of four case scenarios, posing a variety of challenges for the dean. You, along with the others in your group, will have a chance to discuss and decide on solutions to each thorny situation. We hope you will find them to be worthy challenges to your decanal skills.

Case study sessions will be held on Thursday afternoon at 1:45 and Friday morning at 10:45. Registrants will not be assigned a room; ample seating will be provided and individuals will go to a room with seating availability.

Please familiarize yourself with the cases prior to this time. Who are the key players, what are the key facts, and what are the critical issues? The case study session leader will take the group through the set and, after discussing each case, share the actual outcomes.

Thanks in advance for your interest and participation!

CCAS Annual Meeting Program Committee

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*Empowering Deans to Lead*

# #1. TECHNOLOGY & IMMUNOLOGY

You are an Associate Dean who fields grievances in the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences at a regional, comprehensive, public university that prides itself in transforming the lives of many of the students who attend, allowing them to achieve beyond their wildest dreams.

In COVID times, a grievance from an undergraduate biology student, Ms. Lissen Toomey, crosses your desk. Ms. Toomey is dissatisfied with her grade in an advanced immunology course. In her stated comments, the student links her failing grade to the professor, Dr. Rigid's attendance policy. Ms. Lissen Toomey asked the professor if she could access the class via Zoom on days she doesn't attend in person, and Dr. Rigid declined. The student also requested that Dr. Rigid record the lectures share them with her. Dr. Rigid declined, offering to go over materials during office hours instead.

The student says the professor, among other things, is old and doesn't like to make use of the new technologies that could help her get a good grade. Following university procedures, you set up individual meetings with Ms. Toomey and Dr. Rigid. Via Zoom, Ms. Toomey explains that she is immunocompromised. She often has to miss class when slightly ill to avoid getting really sick. She also tells you that she and her family are not vaccinated and do not trust the current vaccine options. She explains that she has been disadvantaged because the professor refuses to host lectures via Zoom. The lab sessions are held virtually, but lectures must be attended in person.

Ms. Toomey also complains about the syllabus, which listed a tentative number of total points over which students will be graded. Once the course was complete, there were fewer available points than originally projected by the professor, thereby putting students at a disadvantage, according to Ms. Toomey, who has received an F.

During your conversation with Ms. Toomey you discover that she is a first generation, immigrant student whose parents came to the U.S. to provide her a better life, starting with access to education. Her lifelong dream is to become a doctor. The grade in the course, (an F as it stands), will prevent her from entering any medical school. She does not wish to return to study another full year to allow for a retake of this course (and the potential for a higher grade). She owes it to her family, who have invested and risked so much for her, to uphold the promise of becoming a doctor.

Dr. Rigid sends a copy of the syllabus to you ahead of your meeting with her. Indeed, the total number of

points, lab exercises and exams are listed as "tentative" in the schedule, although the topics for each week are clearly labeled and the grading scale is clear. Dr. Rigid explains that since the previous iteration of the course, taught in the Spring of 2020 was very disjunctured when everyone was sent home from campus in March, it is as if she had started from scratch. Whereas in the spring of 2020 the course started fully face-to-face and then turned into fully online, the spring 2021 course was designed to be hybrid with lab sessions hosted virtually (i.e., students could read about experiments and data sets but would not physically conduct any hands-on experiments) and the lecture to be hosted in-person in a socially distanced room. When you approach the topic of why the lectures could not be recorded or hosted via Zoom for students who are unable to attend, the professor explains that there is often sensitive material shared during lectures and discussions, in which people in the room reveal information about the immunological status of family members or themselves. In order to protect privacy, she will not allow recordings or broadcasts of lectures, lest they find their way into other channels and become public information.

Additionally, she explains that the new design of the course included some tentative elements to allow her to progress through the material at a pace that would be reasonable. Finally, the professor provides copies of emails in which she states that the student is welcome to come to office hours (virtually or in person) to discuss any missed material. Ms. Toomey never came to office hours. Her test scores varied, but sit squarely at a 49% average. Dr. Rigid notes that she was a first generation college student from an immigrant family and feels an affinity for the struggles of Ms. Toomey, but cannot award second chances without opening the opportunity to other students. ❀

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What additional information will you need to proceed in this case?
2. Are there any issues to navigate with regard to privacy and confidentiality, and if so, what would you do?
3. Who might you contact as you enter into the process of working out this issue?
4. How would you address the specific issues regarding the use of technology (or lack thereof)?

# #2. GRADING DISCRIMINATION

Dr. Goodheart is a second-year chairperson and associate professor in the Department of Social Science at Northern Aware State University, a public regional comprehensive institution. During a Dean's Office staff meeting, you learn Dr. Goodheart changed three course grades, filed with the Registrar at three different times over a four month period, involving courses taken over three semesters, for an undergraduate student in three of Dr. Rigor's upper-division courses.

Dr. Rigor is a tenured associate professor in the same department. When investigating further, you learn the student had regular meetings with Dr. Goodheart complaining about Dr. Rigor's grading of his assignments and believed he was subjected to more intense scrutiny resulting from overt discrimination due to the student openly identifying as gay.

In fact, the student has a pending discrimination complaint against Dr. Rigor with the campus Office of Equal Opportunity. Chair Goodheart assembled an ad hoc grade appeal committee comprised of herself and two faculty members familiar with this student because they had him in class and served as his mentors at various times over the past four years.

The department by-laws stipulate a specific grade appeal process for the department and state the course instructor should have the opportunity to provide a response for the committee to consider. Further, the by-laws clearly state the committee's determination ultimately is advisory to the instructor, who has sole authority to change (or not change) a grade.

This ad hoc committee, knowing Dr. Rigor as a colleague for several years, believed grading discrimination based on sexual identity probably occurred and the grades should be changed without informing Dr. Rigor, involving him in the process, or informing him of the grade changes. The belief was Dr. Rigor probably would never discover the change. The Chair then administratively filed grade changes in the Registrar's Office without informing Dr. Rigor.

When questioned, Dr. Goodheart expressed a sincere belief she was acting in the best interest of this student and did not believe Professor Rigor would change the grades under any circumstances. She also claimed her

action avoided conflating the grade appeal with the Office of Equal Opportunity complaint process.

The three grade changes occurred at three different times (December 2020, March 2021, and April 2021) based on three distinct meetings, deliberations, and decisions by the same ad hoc committee. The changes were from B- to B in one course, and A- to A in the two others.

Also, your discovery of this entire situation occurred right after the student graduated with a bachelor's degree in Spring 2021. ❀

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As Dean, what action, if any, should you take? Should you inform Dr. Rigor? If so, should you provide Dr. Rigor the opportunity to change the grades back to the originals?
2. What conversation should you have with Chair Goodheart? Should others, such as the Provost, Registrar, University Legal Counsel, the Faculty Senate Chair, or Department faculty be involved in conversation? Should there be consequences for the Chair's action?
3. What action should you take concerning the other two faculty on the ad hoc committee?

# #3. STANDARDS FOR PROMOTION

**H**istorical Figure University is a mid-sized, public, liberal arts university. Tenured faculty are required to undergo a formative, midpoint, peer review of their portfolio halfway between earning tenure and being eligible to apply for the rank of Full Professor.

Associate Professor Leigh Z. N. Confident is certain he is on track to becoming a professor and sees this review as an administrative and bureaucratic burden that is unnecessary. The departmental standards for promotion list required components for a complete portfolio. Dr. Confident's submitted portfolio is missing many major components, including artifacts that demonstrate improvement and progress towards the standards required for promotion and minimal reflective statements.

Dr. Confident's peer review committee reviewed the submitted portfolio. The committee notes in their letter some of the missing components. They reflect on their personal knowledge of his work in addition to what he submitted. They concluded stating "The committee members are personally aware of Dr. Confident's enthusiasm and commitment as a teacher and that he has created an active research group, and served the department and university in a variety of ways. On the other hand, we are concerned that the materials and self-reflections for mid-term review are not currently at the standard we would expect to qualify for a promotion to Professor. There is simply not enough documentation present." The committee gave him a favorable review with the expectation stated that he needed to submit a complete portfolio for promotion in three years.

Dr. Confident's department chair, Dr. Cy N. Tist reviewed the portfolio and wrote a favorable two-page letter highlighting mostly his personal experience and knowledge of Dr. Confident's work. He ended the letter with "As the committee noted, extracting information from the materials submitted for the midpoint review was challenging and should be obvious to those who must determine the outcome of the portfolio review."

When Dean Ove R. Worked reviewed the portfolio, he found the submission insufficient to be able to conduct a meaningful review. Dr. Worked discussed it with Dr. Tist. Dr. Tist and the departmental peer review committee neither felt they had the authority to return the portfolio and request revisions for this formative review.

Dr. Worked contacted Dr. Confident and notified him of the lacking materials in the portfolio and requested that he revise and resubmit the portfolio with the appropriate documentation.

In a subsequent meeting, Dr. Confident stated that he felt the portfolio was meaningless because he knew he was on track and put in the minimal effort to submit the original portfolio because it didn't matter to him. Dr. Confident also questioned whether the standards for promotion were appropriate and felt that he should be promoted at his next review because he had put in enough time, regardless of his performance in the position. ❀

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did Dr. Worked do the right thing to require resubmission for the formative review?
2. What could have been done differently to improve this situation?
3. Should Dr. Confident be expected to submit a competitive portfolio if he knows he is on track?

# #4. FACULTY STIPENDS

**A**t a private liberal arts college of 2,000 students, there is a practice of paying stipends to faculty for 'extra' work. Stipends for service on a task force, strategic planning committee, a special project, independent studies, course overloads, and the like are the norm.

Stipends are not only expensive; they promote a transactional culture rather than one based on professional growth. The Dean is looking for a model that eliminates pay-as-you-perform stipends and instead rewards extra contributions as a matter of professional development.

For example, a new strategic implementation plan calls for faculty to volunteer for leadership positions, which the Dean sees as a unique professional development opportunity.

Paying stipends as an incentive will reduce the amount set aside for supporting the actual strategic goals. It will be challenging to eliminate stipends per se, so the model will need to attract faculty buy-in and support faculty at all levels in the promotion process.

Other details: Faculty salaries fall within CUPA guidelines. Tenure is not awarded. The normal teaching load is 4-4, with committee service and scholarship expectations. ❀

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We have to distinguish between what constitutes work that needs to be completed as part of faculty responsibilities vs. service to a department and college that falls outside that definition. How does your campus distinguish between the two?
2. Apart from paying directs stipends, what approach do you use to compensate for additional duties that faculty agree to take on?
3. A new policy can be adopted without faculty approval, but the Dean is looking for effective ways to consult and build consensus with faculty leaders. What has worked on your campus?
4. If you have attempted to move away from paying direct stipends and did not succeed, what happened/ what lessons did you learn?