

CASL Meeting #8 Minutes
February 29, 2024
3:00PM – 4:00PM
Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Chaz Aguilar, Daniel DiMassa (chair), Jim Doyle (secretary), Arnold Lane, Jane Li, Emily Perlow, Adam Powell, Stephen Price, Paul Reilly

Call to Order: 3:01PM

1. Dan DiMassa reported on continuing discussions on the issue of facilitating graduate student advising. It was suggested that each graduate department/program could be asked to provide a contact email address to be kept on a centralized list that would be provided to onboarding students.
2. The subcommittee evaluating nominees for the BOT Award for Outstanding Academic Advising reported that its work was complete.
3. The Committee discussed strategies for helping to disseminate the findings of the Enrolled Student Survey as they relate to LGBTQIAP+ students and the research conducted by the Inclusive Pedagogy research team. The members of CASL agreed to work within their departments to encourage presentations and discussions on these topics at department meetings.
4. The Committee discussed recent concerns expressed by students about political speech on campus. After a recent event on the crisis in Gaza both Muslim and Jewish students reported reluctance to speak out for fear of reprisal. At least one student group has felt the need to remove images of group members from their social media.

WPI policy protects free speech. But the goal of protecting free speech may potentially conflict with the goal of fostering a safe and nonthreatening environment. Balancing those concerns can be challenging in the current environment. Some students may need help learning to engage in controversial topics with civility.

WPI has a bias reporting system: <https://www.wpi.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/bias-response-program> The question arose as to whether anonymous bias reporting could lead to overreporting of incidents of political speech that are nonthreatening, and would confidential but not anonymous reporting help reduce that. On the other hand, it is important to avoid policies that would discourage people from reporting dangerous situations. It was noted that currently the bias incident reporting form could be considered to be under- versus overutilized. Arnold Lane will communicate concerns expressed by CASL members to the Bias Response Team.

The Committee discussed how best to help educate students on issues related to political speech, bias, and bias reporting.

5. Minutes for CASL Meetings #6 and #7 were approved.

Adjournment: 3:52 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Doyle (Secretary)