TO: The Faculty of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering

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

The Committee on Student Life (CSL) collaborates with the administration to imbue in student life the principles, ideals, and values characteristic of the University. Committee activities broadly relate to policy and regulatory oversight, judicial action, and improvement of the student experience. Examples of committee responsibilities include: review and approval of constitutional changes to the student government, review and approval of changes to student governmental procedures and documents, oversight of student groups including Greek organizations, inquiry hearings related to misconduct within or by campus groups, adjudication of appeals by students who have been disciplined by the university, and administering the Wendell Phillips Award.

The following Annual Report details the activities of the CSL for AY 2016-2017.

Wendell Phillips Award

The CSL is charged with the selection of the Wendell Phillips Award winner, a graduating senior who is chosen to be the class speaker at Commencement. In this role, in November, the CSL selects an initial prompt, both written and oral, that is sent to the entire senior class. In AY 2016-2017, there were 18 semi-finalists for the award.

Members of the CSL reviewed the submitted materials and then rank ordered their choices, from which we selected five finalists. The Wendell-Phillips finalists were provided with the following prompt for the final speech:

“Each of us is called upon to take a stand. So in these days ahead, as we examine ourselves and each other, our works, our fears, our differences, our sisterhood and survivals, I urge you to tackle what is most difficult for us all, self-scrutiny of our complacencies, the idea that since each of us believes she is on the side of right, she need not examine her position.”

— Audre Lorde, I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings

During your education at Tufts, when have you been
called on to scrutinize your own beliefs assumptions?
After scrutiny, in what ways did your beliefs change?

On March 15, 2017, the CSL heard the five finalist speeches, an event that is open to the entire Tufts University community, and, after deliberation, selected this year’s Wendell Phillips Award recipient, Ms. Isabella Kahhale.

Disciplinary Appeals and Hearings

October, 2016
CSL Judicial Training for all CSL members. This training was led by Raymond Ou, Senior Associate Dean of Student Affairs. The CSL voted unanimously that all CSL members will go through annual training sessions at the start of the academic year.

October, 2016
CSL faculty co-chairs met with student leaders from the Theta Chi fraternity regarding AY 2015-2016 CSL decision to place the fraternity on social hold. The co-chairs and Theta Chi leaders agreed that the fraternity would put together a set of regulations that address issues of drug use and drug education.

March, 2017
The CSL heard an appeal of a disciplinary decision based on severity of consequence. The case concerned the suspension of a student for plagiarism; additionally, the appeal also called into question the barring of transfer credits from other universities while on suspension from Tufts University. At the conclusion of deliberations, the CSL voted, unanimously, to uphold the suspension. Additionally, the CSL voted in favor of the plaintiff as far as the transfer of credits is concerned.

March 2017
The CSL heard the appeal of a TCUJ decision to de-recognize the Baseball Analysis club on campus on the grounds of denial of fair process. After deliberation, the CSL voted to uphold the decision of the TCUJ.

Other Business

Discussion of Free Speech Issues on Campus
Throughout the Fall, 2016 semester, the CSL discussed issues of free speech on campus. Our discussions were prompted by the resolution of a student group, SAS, calling for the university to change its policies regarding student conduct around issues of expression. The SAS resolution was voted down by the TCU in November.

Revision of workload statement
The co-chairs of the CSL felt the urgent need to create a more accurate workload description for the committee that would replace the current descriptions of the committee work. The proposed changes offered a more accurate description of committee responsibilities, and established a set meeting time (Friday mornings) for CSL meetings. Furthermore, the description accurately reflected that the committee meets bimonthly rather than only monthly. In April, 2017 the CSL voted unanimously to adopt the proposed description changes.

TCUJ Bylaw Changes
In April, 2017, the CSL reviewed proposed changes to the bylaws of the TCUJ regarding student competition groups. The CSL suggested revisions and, at a later meeting, unanimously approved the proposed bylaw changes.

Sanctioning Flexibility for Academic Integrity Cases
An appeal in March 2017 (see above) prompted a discussion with the DOSA about the possibility of greater flexibility in sanctioning in cases of academic integrity. Members of the DOSA met with the CSL to discuss possible changes to policies and practices. In response, the DOSA prepared a revision of sanctioning guidelines in cases of academic integrity and presented them to the committee for vote and discussion. The CSL suggested edits, which will be voted on by the conclusion of the Spring, 2017 semester.