

Committee's proposal tries to make academic honesty policy fair

By NICK LORUSSO

The Senate Appeals Committee (SAC) is proposing changes to policies and procedures governing academic honesty, according to a recently prepared brief.

Chairman of the SAC, Professor Ron Webb, said the proposed changes will benefit both faculty and students. Now all concerned parties will know what to expect because policy will be clearly outlined and the procedures regarding hearings and initiating complaints will be made consistent throughout all faculties.

The major change in procedure, Webb said, is that a student with a confession of guilt may submit what he believes to be an appropriate penalty for the infraction and witnesses may be cross-examined at hearings.

Webb explained that the latter was a result of a court ruling last year involving a York student, Bashir Hajee, who was accused of academic dishonesty. When the SAC refused to allow Hajee's lawyer to cross-examine two witnesses, Hajee appealed the SAC decision to the Ontario Supreme Court, which ruled in Hajee's favour. The court stated that SAC's decision against cross-examination was a "departure from the essential grounds of fairness."

"These changes, therefore," Webb said, "would prevent future court cases."

What will also be eliminated, according to Webb, is the professor acting as prosecutor, judge and jury in minor misdemeanor cases. With the student previously unable to appeal until after the professor's decision, it appeared in some instan-

ces that the student was considered guilty until proven innocent.

The secretary of SAC, David Thompson, pointed out that the changes in policy will not be substantial. "What the Senate tried to do," Thompson said, "was outline a number of areas which may have been considered 'grey areas' (with respect to breaches of academic honesty)."

When Thompson was asked how the changes would affect students, he said that the changes were developed to have a consistent policy rather than correct any regulations which may have been unfair. "I wouldn't want to say that the proposals are more fair because that would be saying procedures before were not acceptable," Thompson said. "The changes provide clarification for students and a complete explanation of what is required in terms of academic honesty."

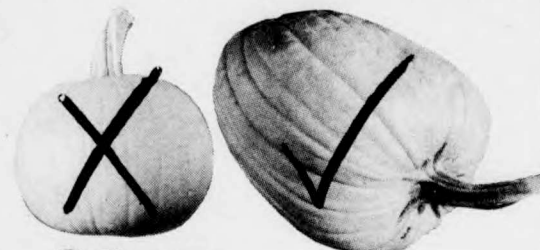
The SAC, in preparing the proposals, looked at policies and procedures in other universities. "I think by the end of this process," Thompson said, "we will have one of the best procedures when comparing with other universities."

Even so, Thompson is not sure if the proposals will be passed. "It's hard to say if the changes will be put through," he said. "Everyone supports the general thrust to make things more clear, more informative and fair and have things done as efficiently as possible, but I could not say if they'll go through."

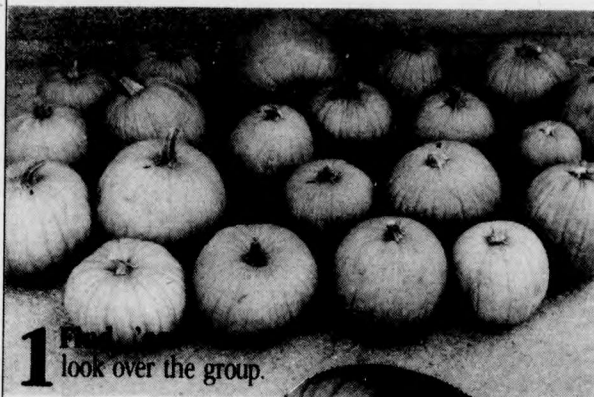
The SAC will submit a report of its proposals at the December meeting of the Senate after the SAC has received faculty input on the prospective changes.

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