Members of the 2019-2020 SCESF Committee
Jennifer Blouin, Wharton/Accounting
Peter Cappelli, Wharton/Management, (Chair)
Dennis Collhane, Social Policy and Practice
Blanca Himes, PSOM/Biostatistics, Epidemiology, & Informatics
Sarah Kagan, Nursing
Iouri Manovskii, SAS/Economics
Ex Officio:
Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Annenberg, Faculty Senate Chair-Elect
Steven Kimbrough, Wharton, Faculty Senate Chair
Jennifer Pinto-Martin, Nursing, Faculty Senate Past Chair

The Committee gratefully acknowledges the additional information
provided in response to SCESF requests by the Offices of the Provost, In-
stitutional Research and Analysis, and Budget and Management Analysis.

VII. Tables
The full report of the 2019 SCESF, including numerous Tables and
the Responses from the Administration, can be found online at

Report of the Senate Committee on Students and Educational Policy
(SCSEP)

Background
The Committee oversees and advises the Executive Committee on
matters relating to the University’s policies and procedures on the ad-
mission and instruction of students, including academic integrity, admissions
policies and administration, evaluation of teaching, examinations and
grading, academic experiences, educational opportunities (such as study
abroad), student records, disciplinary systems, and the campus environ-
ment/climate. In general, the Committee deals with the matters covered by
the following section of the University’s Handbook for Faculty and Aca-
demic Administrators IV.

Campus Climate: Student Mental Health and Wellbeing have been SC-
SEP’s focus for several years. We received a briefing from Penn’s Chief
Wellness Officer (CWO), Dr. Benoit Dubé (appointed July 2018) and the
progress his team and he have made during his second year of building
mental health and wellbeing support and access for students, including an
expansion of services provided by Counseling and Psychological Services
(CAPS). We inquired about ways in which we might transform what some
see as a toxic campus climate to one that fosters a greater sense of commu-
nity and provides a range of emotional and psychological mechanisms for
building resilience and thriving at Penn without assuming a “Penn Face”
as the only strategy. We were interested in examining wellness both as
a serious mental illness challenge and as a multi-faceted problem with a po-
tentially wide array of programming and educational solutions. In retro-
spective, we would not have been a more appropriate focus for the com-
mittee: the year began with the death by suicide of CAPS Director Dr.
Gregory Eells and ended with the campus shutdown, early move-out, and
transition to remote learning by students prompted by the COVID-19 pan-
demic in March 2020.

2019-2020 SCSEP Specific Charges
1. Review and comment on issues related to the role of the pass/fail grading
   option, urging faculty to create the best possible environment for
   course completion, exam scheduling, and so forth—were priori-
tized by Deans in communicating with faculty once learning went
   remote. The sheer challenge of moving instruction online revealed,
in ways that might not have been obvious in regular circumstances, how
challenging
   life and learning can be for so many of our resource-limited or “first
   generation, low income” (FGLI) students. How effective these recom-
   mendations were in supporting student wellbeing must be evaluated in
   the coming year. SCSEP should include in our evaluation two factors:
   the longer-term concerns of student sharing of medications and the impact
   of social media on heightened levels of social and classroom anxiety
   which were noted in our 2018-2019 report.

   Our purpose this year was initially to expand our inquiry into other
   mechanisms that might exist, or be transformed in purpose, to enhance
   student wellbeing on campus. This included inquiry into a variety of new
   and existing campus programs: the Sachs Program for Arts Innovation

(continued on page 5)
include the testimonials of students who have been supported by CAPS while retaining their privacy.

The remaining recommendations speak to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on students.

The College Houses have clearly been at the forefront in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic: we are grateful to, and impressed by, the astute and generous manner in which the University, Vice Provost for Education Beth Winkelstein, CHAS Faculty Director Lisa Lewis, CHAS write large, and the hard-working staff within the Offices of the Vice Provost for University Life, Student Intervention Services, Student Health Services, and Penn First Plus drew on and expanded the emergency procedures already in place at Penn to get students off campus and back home (or somewhere safe) to complete their semester through remote learning (including the provision of small stipends for food and internet connectivity in some cases). Students were allowed to petition to remain on campus, and some have, with expanded meal plans, individual rooms with private bathrooms, and social distancing plans implemented.

We use this moment of complete disruption and the move to remote learning to consider what it will mean for the future of education and the campus experience. What will be the long-term impact on Penn of such a radical shift in the medium of knowledge transmission? What will be the challenges to creating a sense of safety, of building community, to removing fear and anxiety, and constituting a supportive learning environment?

The University had emergency procedures in place, but in the face of COVID-19 had to implement a series of new and costly initiatives. SCSEP would welcome an internal report on how these procedures were transformed in the unprecedented context of a global pandemic.

8. SCSEP calls upon student leadership organizations, including the Undergraduate Assembly and the Student Committee on Undergraduate Education to gather and report data on the successes and challenges of the COVID-19 response from the University.

Committee Findings and Questions

1. SPAI (founded October 2016) provides resources to students, staff, and faculty to support arts initiatives across a spectrum from securing funding to attend live theater to creating visual or digital media installations. SCSEP asked how the program evaluates the impact of the arts resources on students. We requested that SPAI report its findings to SCSEP and inquired as to whether students are encouraged to use their funding for the arts as a mechanism for individual or collective wellbeing. Could SPAI, then, create a funding line for FGLI students and work out how to make the funding more widely accessible to all students?

2. The Your Big Idea Wellness campus competition was held in spring 2019 and led to the implementation of a number of campus initiatives that all promote individual wellness: (a) Campus Walks, (b) Nature Rx as possible kind of treatment for emotional wellbeing, (c) expansion of the Penn Garden to Penn Park as a means of addressing food insecurity issues amongst Penn students and staff, and (d) Campus Conversations where faculty discuss overcoming adversities. We recommend that the Provost’s office ensure these programs are better known on campus, and SCSEP is interested in how they are evaluated for impact and effectiveness.

3. Student anxiety is a growing campus health challenge. Sources of anxiety include the sense that there is growing uncertainty in student lives. Examples of uncertainty include the COVID-19 pandemic; climate change (see the interim report from the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on the Institutional Response to Climate Change, “CIRCIE,” in this supplement); growing wealth disparities; increased reliance on social media resulting in diminished face-to-face engagement and interpersonal skills. We know anecdotally that CAPS has observed a significant increase in anxiety among students and has developed strategies for addressing anxiety on the individual level. We need to know whether these findings are now evidence-based, and we would like to see explicit guidelines for addressing mental health (and other) emergencies when Penn students are abroad. If a student has to return home unexpectedly, what happens to a student’s capacity to travel, we would like to see explicit guidelines for addressing mental health (and other) emergencies when Penn students are abroad. If a student has to return home unexpectedly, what happens to their educational program? Who decides, as in the case of a global pandemic like COVID-19, when and how a student should return to campus? We urge the University to ensure that all study abroad programs that are faculty-led include provisions for a staff member to travel with the faculty person to handle logistics.

4. Penn Global programs have benefitted significantly from generous donor support, meaning that students from all income groups can study abroad. Short term, in the summer, or during a regular semester. The LPS Summer Abroad program is an ongoing if smaller program. The mental health challenges of student travel are significant and perhaps not as easily interrogated (as compared to physical health) prior to departure on a study abroad experience. While there have been significant changes to evaluating student’s capacity to travel, we would like to see explicit guidelines for addressing mental health (and other) emergencies when Penn students are abroad. If a student has to return home unexpectedly, what happens to their educational program? Who decides, as in the case of a global pandemic like COVID-19, when and how a student should return to campus? We urge the University to ensure that all study abroad programs that are faculty-led include provisions for a staff member to travel with the faculty person to handle logistics.

5. CAPS has expanded and diversified its staff knowledge and capacity to address the breadth of Penn student challenges, but there is still a perception that CAPS cannot meet student needs. Could resources be allocated to generate a digital public health messaging program that could