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Regents to review modified conduct rules

Additional changes respond to concerns raised during two-year review

MADISON, Wis. – After a two-year process, the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents will review two revised administrative rules covering student conduct and conduct on university property. If approved by the Regents next week in Milwaukee, the revised rules will be submitted to the State Legislature.

Over the last two years, UW System has sought feedback from a broad array of concerned stakeholders about the rules. That process began in February 2007 with a committee of university representatives and students. That group identified improvements to Chapter UWS 17 of the State Administrative Code, which addresses conduct of UW System students, along with Chapter UWS 18, which regulates conduct on university lands by students and non-students alike. The last major revision of both chapters occurred in 1996.

As part of the review process, the committee twice invited public input via a special website, held two public listening sessions, and conducted extensive research before submitting recommendations to the Regents in October 2008. The Regents held another opportunity for public comment on March 5 at UW-Milwaukee to solicit further feedback.

Previously, the proposed rules were modified to make clear that the university may discipline students for off-campus conduct under certain circumstances. In direct response to more recent concerns and comments from various stakeholders, the proposed rules now incorporate additional revisions, including:

- > Expanded language about students' constitutional rights, specifically addressing freedom of speech and freedom of assembly
- > Additional notice requirements, ensuring students receive both e-mail and paper notification of pending disciplinary proceedings
- > Narrower language regarding discipline for municipal violations, requiring that such violations be both "serious and repeated" for the student to be subject to Chapter UWS 17 discipline (changed from serious "or" repeated) if the violations affect the University
- > Students may choose between a hearing examiner and a hearing committee, regardless of the seriousness of the proposed sanctions, maintaining existing language in Chapter UWS17
- > Explicitly allows students to be advised at a hearing by a lawyer, and allows that advisor to speak on a student's behalf when the student is facing possible suspension or expulsion, or when the student has been charged with a crime in connection with the same conduct that prompted the disciplinary proceedings
- > Maintains students' rights to appeal various sanctions to the campus chancellor but reverts to the existing provision that any sanction may be appealed to the Board of Regents.

If approved by the Board of Regents on May 8, the revised rules will be submitted to the Legislature for review, with a goal of having new rules in place for the Fall 2009 academic semester.

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