



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

OCT 6 2009

Catherine McMullen, Chief
Disclosure Unit, Office of Special Council
1730 M Street, N.W., Suite 218
Washington, DC 20036-4505

Re: OSC-DI-09-0428

Dear Ms. McMullen:

This responds to the questions Karen Gorman of your office raised in her July 15, 2009, email to Senior Investigator Alan Boehm regarding OSC File No. DI-09-0428. Ms. Gorman asked a series of questions and I am providing answers to them below.

The [Department of the Office of Interior (DOI) Inspector General's (OIG)] report reflects that several of the [Government-wide Acquisition Management Intern Program] GAMIP interns cheated on the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) online course exams, but lacks specific details. Which interns were found to have cheated and how did they cheat?

The Record of Investigation (ROI) cites LaRone President, Aseia Chaudhry, Chris Henshaw, Rodney Brooks, Rodney Walters and Alfredia Allen as having admitted to sharing questions and/or answers to an on-line foundational course test. This foundational course was designed to prepare the interns for the rigorous instructor-led training they would attend at DAU. Specifically, it was designed to ensure that the interns had a common, base knowledge for the training. It was an open-book computer-based exam. It is our understanding that DAU had no rules precluding interns from sharing the questions or the answers. Since the goal of the foundational course was to establish a common knowledge base, the sharing of the questions and the answers did not undermine that goal. This practice would have been much more problematic during the class room component of the training which was designed to assess the information retention of the core curriculum.

What is the current status of the interns found to have cheated? Are they federal employees, and, if so, where and in what capacity?

All of the GAMIP interns who shared questions and answers during the preliminary computer-based post-test were DOI employees. They all remain DOI GAMIP interns except for Alfredia Allen, Rodney Walters, and LaRone President. Ms. Allen and Mr. Walters left DOI and the intern program to take positions in the Federal government. Ms. Allen is at the Department of Homeland Security and Mr. Walters is at the Defense Logistics Agency, which is part of the

Department of Defense. Ms. President was terminated from the internship program during her probationary period.

The report indicated that DAU had a general student academic policy but that this policy did not address or prohibit the sharing of online course exams/materials. This implies that the confirmed cheating on the online exams falls outside the parameters of general standards of conduct. Is it the findings of the agency head that because there was no specific policy addressing the online materials, that the conduct was acceptable?

It is not the findings of the agency that the conduct of the DOI GAMIP interns was acceptable. In fact, administrative action was taken with respect to all of the DOI GAMIP interns who were found to have shared questions and answers to the preliminary assessment.

Similarly, is it the finding of the agency head that the cheating would not fall within the parameters of the Standards of Ethical Conduct for federal employees?

It is also not the finding of the agency that the conduct of the DOI GAMIP interns in this matter would not fall within the parameters of the Standards of Conduct. The agency has taken administrative action to deal with the employees' conduct.

Has any action been taken against the interns who were found to have cheated?

Yes. As discussed above, administrative action was taken to address the actions of the interns.

During [the OSC] July 14, 2009, telephone conversation [with SA Boehm], it was brought to [OSC's] attention that the interns accused by Ms. President of cheating were, during the course of the agency's investigation, questioned by DAU officials as to whether or not they cheated. We were informed that the interns initially denied cheating but later, when questioned by another agency official, admitted to the wrongdoing. Have these interns been in any way held accountable for their initial deceit? What is the agency's position regarding the possibility that these interns' lack of candor in an investigation may constitute a violation of the Standards of Conduct for federal employees?

The lack of candor of the DOI GAMIP interns is a concern and was considered in the administrative actions taken.

Has any action been taken against any of the DAU supervisors who were made aware of the cheating allegations and took no action until OSC became involved?

The DAU was not an agency sponsor of the intern program and none of the interns were under the supervision of DAU supervisors and managers. DOI supervisors took immediate action upon learning of allegations of cheating from Ms. President despite Ms. President's unwillingness to

provide specific information to DOI supervisors about who had cheated and how they had cheated. Nevertheless, the DOI supervisors questioned interns. Also, DOI supervisors took administrative action upon learning sufficient facts on which to base the action.

Has the general student academic policy been modified or amended to limit cheating on the online exams?

DOI understands that DAU has amended its policy to clearly prohibit sharing on-line open-book test questions and answers. Furthermore, DOI has drafted its own new academic policy. This new draft policy is undergoing an internal review, including a legal review. It contains a section on academic integrity that provides clear expectations that students avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, such as cheating, plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, and other violations of academic standards of conduct.

Has any new policy been adopted to prohibit such actions in the future?

See above.

Please contact Associate Solicitor-General Law Edward T. Keable if you have any additional questions on this matter. You can reach him at (202) 208-3233.

Very truly,



Pam Haze
Deputy Assistant Secretary-Budget
and Business Management

cc: Art Gary, Deputy Solicitor
Ed Keable, Associate Solicitor-General Law
Lynn McPheeters, President, DOIU