

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (SCEP)
November 11, 2015
Minutes of the Meeting

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

[In these minutes: Accreditation Update; Discussion of Proposed Changes to Three Administrative Policies; Discussion of Undergraduate Concerns to the Administrative Policy on Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences; Approval of Alternate Teaching Evaluation Form at Rochester]

PRESENT: Sue Wick (chair), Nicola Alexander, Michael Anderson, William Dammann, Elaine Darst, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Gayle Golden, Jennifer Goodnough, Karla Hemesath, Ken Leopold, Robert McMaster, Savio Poovathingal, Rachna Shah, Yang You, Nevin Young, Henry Zurn

REGRETS: Keith Mayes, Alon McCormick, Henning Schroeder

ABSENT: Lauren Lindquist, Hamza Musse

GUESTS: Joe Shultz, Associate to the Provost, Academic Affairs; Professor Elizabeth Davis, Chair, Graduate Education Council Policy Subcommittee; Joelle Stangler, President, Minnesota Student Association; Char Voight, Assistant to, Graduate School; Steven Hawks, Program Director, Undergraduate Education

OTHERS ATTENDING: Suzanne Bardouche, Belinda Cheung, Leslie Schiff, Stacey Tidball

1. ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Vice Provost Robert McMaster reported that the accreditation visit took place last month, involving the Twin Cities and Rochester. The reviewers will provide a report in 2016.

Joe Shultz said that the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) site visits took place on October 26-27 and went well. A small team at the University authored the pre-submitted materials. The University was not sure of what it would get out of the review meetings as the reviewers were a hard group to read. This was the same experience at Chicago and Northwestern. The reviewers requested additional materials during their visit and did not share much information during the exit interview.

He noted that there are six regional accreditation agencies within the U.S; the HLC region is the largest with 2000 schools and the same review criteria is used for all. The HLC is restructuring and the transition is not completely understood. This year's review was shorter and with fewer reviewers than in 2005.

Vice Provost McMaster then reviewed slides on the assessment of undergraduate student learning. There is strong leadership in this area, starting with the Provost. There was also an executive steering committee, which met every two weeks, and a steering committee that held a retreat every six months to discuss collegiate data and best practices. The steering committee also include two independent faculty representatives.

The work being done on campus was guided by HLC's core component 4B as well as the seven Student Development Outcomes (SDOs) and the seven Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that were approved by the Faculty Senate in 2007.

The assessment is composed of three areas, SERU tracking, Annual Progress Reports (APRs) from each undergraduate department/program, and Writing Enriched Curriculum (WEC). Each unit develops assessment outcomes. They are encouraged to use the seven SLOs, but if they decide to use other outcomes, then the unit needs to provide its methodology.

There are 55 units that participate in WEC. There is an assessment by students before and after taking a WEC course and writing samples from WEC courses are rated every three years to show improvements.

Going forward, Vice Provost McMaster said that the annual reports will continue at the undergraduate level. The University will also review its learning outcomes and assessments to see if changes or flexibility are needed.

Q: Is accreditation only focused on SLOs?

A: No. The review involves five criteria and 21 core components.

Q: Is it normal for an institution not to get results before the reviewers leave?

A: Yes, it is normal. However, the reviewers normally read a prepared statement, which this group did not do.

2. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGE TO THREE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Professor Elizabeth Davis, Chair of the Graduate Education Council (GEC) Policy Subcommittee, presented proposed amendments to three graduate education policies.

Appointments as Director of Graduate Studies

She said that after this policy was reviewed, it was determined that the policy is still needed with only a few minor changes. The proposal clarifies the option of the Provost to delegate responsibility for appointments to the Dean of Graduate Education and includes an exemption provision. It also clarifies responsibilities of the position, as well as that those responsibilities also apply to co-chairs.

Q: If this policy will apply to graduate and professional programs, should the new position for professional education be added?

A: No. The review is being done under the current structure and professional programs are excluded from this policy.

Q: Why was the last sentence from the reasons section deleted?

A: All programs have staff members so the GEC Subcommittee assumed that this is already taking place.

Q: Can this sentence be left in the policy, just noting that large programs are excluded?

A: No since assistant positions are not clearly defined and are not required to be faculty members.

Q: Can delegation to someone else be added to a FAQ?

A: If this information is not mentioned anywhere else in the policy, it would not be appropriate to just have it in a FAQ.

Members made the following comments:

- Without language in the policy regarding delegation of responsibilities, it implies that it cannot happen
- If this is substantive work of a DGS, should a non-faculty member be doing it?
- Leadership is a big role of a DGS while tracking students and paperwork are administrative duties

The policy was approved as presented.

Application of Credits for Students Earning Graduate Degrees

Professor Davis said that this policy involves credits in a student's degree plan to meet degree requirements. The revisions focus the policy on the minimum number of credits earned at the University and unique to the program. Any additional credits are up to each program to determine.

This policy was brought to SCEP last spring and then presented to the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) which had various concerns. The GEC Subcommittee did more work over the summer and made four main changes:

- Policy name was changed back to its original name
- Unique minimum credits that a student takes while enrolled in a program can count towards both a Master's and Ph.D. in the same program
- Credits taken towards a baccalaureate degree will continue to not be allowed to count towards a graduate degree
- Minors are addressed

Members made the following comments:

- Policy should make it clearer that five year combined bachelor and Master's programs are exempt
- Many students take graduate-level courses in the final semester of their undergraduate career, which means that the credits are at the undergraduate rate
- Only allowing credits to count towards one degree makes the policy clearer
- Departments could have the discretion to count the credits towards the graduate degree
- If students take graduate credits at the undergraduate level, they are missing other aspects of a graduate degree program
- Student debt is a concern so students should not have to pay for courses a second time
- Students can take other courses to satisfy a major instead of retaking the same course
- Many honors students take harder courses so they should not be penalized
- Is a graduate degree a body of work or a checklist?
- Undergraduate and graduate students are graded differently and can have different standards in a course
- This policy makes sense and helps when advising students
- Undergraduate students make the choice to take graduate-level courses
- Elective and minor credits should count towards a major
- Programs should be able to determine if credits can be double-counted

Q: Currently, if a student takes graduate-level credits before their baccalaureate degree is awarded, do those credits count towards a graduate degree.

A: No, it is currently not allowed. The reasons for this are that it complicates the tuition rate charged, when the credits count, college enrollment figures, and does not allow a distinction between the baccalaureate and graduate degree.

Q: What are the policies at other institutions?

A: Some leave it up to each program to decide.

Q: Is the language regarding minors programs new?

A: Yes as the current policy does not cover this topic, or prohibit it. However the graduate plan sheet already addresses majors and minors. A minor at the Master's level will require six credits while a minor at the Ph.D. level will require 12 credits. A student will officially need to declare a minor.

Q: Can programs have additional requirements for a minor?

A: Yes.

Appointments as Director of Graduate Studies

Professor Davis said that this policy governs who is eligible and can serve in which roles. They have been asking for feedback on how this process is working.

With no more time for this item, it was decided that this policy would be brought back at a future meeting.

3. DISCUSSION OF UNDERGRADUATE CONCERNS TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY ON MAKEUP WORK FOR LEGITIMATE ABSENCES

Professor Wick said that after students raised concerns about the Makeup Work Policy with the Faculty Consultative Committee, she agreed to have SCEP revisit this topic.

Joelle Stangler, President of the Minnesota Student Association (MSA), said that she appreciates the work that was done on the policy this summer but there are still concerns that students have regarding some of the conditions in the policy, such as timely and reasonable. MSA has heard about some courses stating at the beginning of the semester that there will be no legitimate absences or makeup work. This sets a poor tone from the start.

She knows that most faculty are good about following the guidelines in this policy, however MSA is hoping for more accommodations regarding the bereavement sections. They would propose something similar to how bereavement is handled for employees so that students have weight behind the request that they make. She also cited the Purdue policy, which documents relationships and distance being traveled in relation to time to makeup exams and labs, as well as extensions for assignments.

She said that mental health is also not explicitly listed in the policy, which can force students to face a higher standard or have to provide more documentation.

Q: Do students believe that mental health is not covered by this policy?

A: It is up to interpretation since it is not explicitly cited in the policy.

Q: Bereavement and travel for it are covered by this policy. What else do students want included?

A: It is still up to the instructor to determine what is timely and reasonable notice and accommodations. If the policy provides no guidance, then instructors assume that there is no option available. MSA would like to see a stronger minimum included.

Members made the following comments:

- If faculty are not following this policy, minimums will not fix this problem
- Could DUGS be another way to address issues between a student and faculty?
- Students should assume that accommodations will be made when they will miss class due to bereavement and any conflict can be addressed after
- Students are not empowered to ask for accommodations
- Employees and students are different and need to be treated as such
- If more specifics are added to the policy, it becomes more restrictive for students instead of more helpful
- There are some activities which cannot be made up if missed
- Faculty should be encouraged to remove the grade from missed work and calculate the course grade based on the remaining work, or devise an alternate strategy to provide a grade
- If there are few graded assignments in a course, a student can be disadvantaged if they miss something
- Language in the FAQ section should be considered

Vice Provost Robert McMaster said that it is egregious that students are told the first day of class that there will be no makeup work as this is completely against policy.

Professor Wick suggested that a subcommittee work on further revisions so that a new draft can be presented at the December meeting for a vote. Gayle Golden, Michael Anderson, William Dammann, Ken Leopold, Stacy Doepner-Hove, and Joelle Stangler agreed to serve on the subcommittee.

4. APPROVAL OF ALTERNATE TEACHING EVALUATION FORM AT ROCHESTER

Following feedback received at the previous meeting, members approved the following exemption: Based on the request by the University of Minnesota Rochester, SCEP grants a five-year exception to the Administrative Policy on Evaluation of Teaching for the Rochester Bachelor of Science in Health Professions (BSHP) degree so that it may use the discipline-specific evaluation form required by the Mayo School of Health Sciences (MSHS) for courses and clinicals in this degree.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business, Professor Wick thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate