

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (SCEP)
December 9, 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: Discussion of Proposed Changes to Two Graduate Administrative Policies; Discussion of Proposed Changes to Three Undergraduate Administrative Policies; Discussion of Undergraduate Student Tuition and Financial Aid]

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

REGRETS: Henning Schroeder, Nevin Young

GUESTS: Suzanne Bardouche, Assistant Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education; Belinda Cheung, Assistant Vice Provost, Graduate Education; Professor Elizabeth Davis, Chair, Graduate Education Council Policy Subcommittee; Stacey Tidball, Associate Director, Academic Support Resources

OTHERS ATTENDING: Tina Falkner, Leslie Schiff

1. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO TWO GRADUATE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Application of Credits for Students Earning Graduate Degrees

Professor Elizabeth Davis, Chair of the Graduate Education Council (GEC) Policy Review Subcommittee, said that this revision sets minimum standards for Master's and doctoral degrees, allows programs to set higher requirements, and prevents courses used towards one minor to be counted towards a second minor. Based on feedback at the November meeting, FAQ 4 and 5 were revised. FAQ 2 was revised by the GEC to state that any courses taken before enrollment in the graduate program can be waived by the program, but that this waiver does not reduce the total number of credits required for the degree.

Q: Has the issue of a student moving to the University with their faculty advisor been addressed?

A: Yes. The policy requires 12 credits to be taken at the University in addition to 24 thesis credits. This requirement is not seen as too onerous.

The policy was approved as presented.

Appointments to Graduate Examination Committees

Professor Davis said that the GEC is looking for SCEP's feedback today, then the policy will be brought back for a vote. For background she said that the old Graduate School Constitution listed categories of membership with corresponding responsibilities for governance, teaching, and examination roles. Graduate faculty are now defined by their role within the program – advisor, chair, member, or reviewer – but it is not clear who has oversight over the roles being assigned by the programs.

The revisions to this policy include a reorganization around the role being performed and the type of committee. There is a separate policy that defines the makeup of examination committees. She asked for SCEP feedback on the general approach being taken, the minimum standards, and how to clarify the faculty role in the oversight of the roles being assigned by the programs when they are entered in the database.

Q: If a faculty member only has a Master's degree but has significant service at the University, are they disqualified from some roles simply because they do not have a doctoral degree?

A: If a field has a doctoral degree option, than anyone with a Master's cannot serve on the doctoral committee or as the advisor. This is already current policy.

Q: How is the database populated and refreshed?

A: Names are added along with the appropriate role but then nothing else takes place. The policy and the database information are treated separately.

Q: What oversight do colleges have of the database information?

A: Oversight varies but it does not appear that anyone is checking the information in the database once it is entered even though the policy states that it should be reviewed every three years. The student examination committee form is only checked by the college to confirm that the names are included in the database. There needs to be better oversight to protect students.

Members made the following comments:

- Who can serve on doctoral or Master's committees is appropriate
- Are there consequences if information in the database is out-of-date or incorrect?
- Programs are unlikely to add people to the database who are unqualified
- Exceptions are helpful for students who need them
- Policy should drive the process and behavior
- Graduate School should remind colleges to review their information
- If review is a requirement for programs, then it should be added to the responsibility section of the policy
- Programs can have stricter standards for who can serve in some roles

Professor Davis said that any additional questions can be sent to her at: edavis@umn.edu

2. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THREE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Academic Calendars

Stacey Tidball from Academic Support Resources said that this policy was up for comprehensive review. The only changes being proposed are two FAQs, one that addresses the Rochester calendar process and one in response to student requests to add a fall break. She noted that students would like more calendar flexibility to add a fall break. However, this is not possible in all years due to when Labor Day falls in September.

Q: What are the calendars at peer institutions?

A: Most peer institutions have more flexibility as they start before Labor Day and have fewer final examinations days as they are smaller campuses.

Q: How is the University of Michigan able to offer 68 days per semester?

A: The University is not sure since federal regulations require a 70-day minimum. If that institution has more minutes per class, it might account for the low number of days.

Q: Would the University approve a fall semester with less than 70 days?

A: No since federal financial aid would be at risk.

Members made the following comments:

- Some peer institutions have a full week off at Thanksgiving or time off around MEA
- A long weekend in the middle of the semester removes another week that can be used for lab courses
- The fall break at Morris is also disruptive to lab courses

Stacey Tidball then asked for committee feedback regarding FAQ 2. There is a feeling that it does not relate to this policy and instead should be added to the Admin Policy on Teaching and Learning: Instructor and Unit Responsibilities.

Members made the following comments:

- This requirement is needed as students might not have time to do work prior to class starting or have another obligation, such as study abroad.
- FAQ should be moved to a different policy

Stacey Tidball agreed that FAQ 2 would be removed from this policy.

The policy was approved as amended.

Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences

Stacey Tidball presented the revised policy, which incorporates changes recommended by the subcommittee. The policy statement is now more direct, strongly recommended has been replaced by should in two locations, language on mental illness has been added, and a few FAQs have been combined. These changes address the student concerns that were shared with SCEP at the last meeting.

Q: How will students receive disability accommodations?

A: They will need to work with the Disability Resource Center.

The policy was approved as presented.

Scheduling Examinations, Final Examinations, and Study Days

Stacey Tidball said that the comprehensive review of this policy yielded only a few minor changes. The one issue that remains is conflicts for final examinations. The policy refers students to their advisor yet the advisor does not have the authority to reschedule final examinations. She asked members for their suggestions.

Members made the following comments:

- Advisor only works if this person is also a faculty member
- Some classes hold final examinations during the last week of the course which may eliminate some issues
- Only exams that are not comprehensive for a course can occur during the last week
- All A-term classes are required to offer their final examination during the last week of the course and is acceptable under this policy
- Most conflicts occur between courses that utilize the common examination times
- Study day language in the policy is incorrect for Morris and should be updated

- The Student Conflict Resolution Center should be asked how it mediates final examination disputes
- Office for Undergraduate Education might need to be the unit to resolve these issues

3. DISCUSSION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID

Vice Provost Robert McMaster then presented slides on tuition and financial aid for undergraduate students, highlighting the following points:

- Three parts are tuition, financial aid, and enrollment management
- In the Big Ten, the University used to be one of the top three for resident cost but it is now in the middle
- University has developed principles to guide financial aid
- Cost of attendance for residents is now just over \$25,000 per year or \$100,000 for a four-year degree
- A small tuition increase is being presented to the Regents tomorrow
- University has the lowest or second lowest room and board rate in the Big Ten
- Non-resident tuition rate is \$36,000 per year as tuition and transportation rates are higher
- Financial aid for the system is \$500,000 million per year
- Gift aid is increasing while loans are decreasing
- 40 percent of undergraduates graduate with no debt
- Tuition freeze has helped the average student debt load
- Existing out-of-state students will be offered discounts and waivers to keep their tuition costs lower
- Out-of-state recruitment might be affected by the tuition increase
- Resident students value the geographic diversity provided by out-of-state students and do not care that they are not paying more
- Estimated family contribution at the federal level is too low to support the current cost of attendance

Q: Many first generation students enroll first at community colleges. What is the University's philosophy to recruit and offer financial aid to these students?

A: Minnesota residents from low-income families are the priority for awarding financial aid packages. Financial aid at the University tends to target first-time, full-time undergraduates so there are fewer resources available for transfer students. However transfer students are eligible for two years under the University Promise Scholarship, and possibly PELL and state grants if those funds were not used during their first two years. A new capital campaign is being planned during which funding for transfer students will be part of the request.

Q: What affected rates in 2010-11?

A: Federal stimulus funds.

Q: Does the University deliberately increase University aid when expenses increase?

A: As tuition increases, the University tries to backfill with financial aid.

Q: Would the University consider guaranteeing a tuition rate for four years?

A: This was offered in the late 1990s and was a hard program for the University to administer since many students were at different tuition rates which then impacted financial aid awards.

Q: How does international tuition compare to out-of-state tuition?

A: An international fee was added a few years ago to pay for increased student services for this group, but a separate tuition has not been considered.

Members stated that out-of-state students are disappointed that their tuition rate will be increasing at a greater rate

Vice Provost said that he would complete the presentation at the next meeting.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

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

Becky Hippert
University Senate