

EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (SCEP)
MINUTES
JANUARY 27, 2016

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 Completion Times for Master's and Doctoral Students; Discussion of Proposed Changes to Three Administrative Policies - Awarding Posthumous Degrees, Educational Materials Conflict of Interest, Instructional Time Per Course Credit; Continued Discussion of Undergraduate Student Tuition and Financial Aid]

PRESENT: Sue Wick (chair), Michael Anderson, William Dammann, Elaine Darst, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Gayle Golden, Jennifer Goodnough, Ken Leopold, Keith Mayes, Alon McCormick, Robert McMaster, Savio Poovathingal, Rachna Shah, Nevin Young.

REGRETS: Nicola Alexander, Karla Hemesath, Henning Schroeder, Henry Zurn.

ABSENT: Yang You.

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

OTHERS ATTENDING: Leslie Schiff.

1. DISCUSSION OF COMPLETION TIMES FOR MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Professor Kathleen Thomas, member of the Graduate Education Council (GEC) and the GEC policy subcommittee, said that there is no proposed policy language to present at this time. Instead, the GEC is gathering feedback regarding the time limits to earn a degree in two policies - Master's Degree: Performance Standards and Progress and Doctoral Degree: Performance Standards and Progress.

For the policy governing doctoral students, the degree completion time limit is eight calendar years , with one extension of up to 24 months being approved by the college, and a second up to two-year extension for extraordinary circumstances being reviewed and approved by the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education. For Master's students, the time limit is five calendar years with only one, one-year extension. For students who do not complete a degree within these limits, and stop registering, they need to seek readmission to the program and it is not guaranteed.

The GEC is trying to find a reasonable time limit to complete a degree which applies to everyone, but also permits flexibility and diversity in programs and students.

The questions she posed to SCEP included:

- Is eight years the correct length for all doctoral degrees?
- How many extensions should be permitted before requiring a student to seek readmission?
- Are time limits the best way to allow programs to manage lingering students?

- What is the maximum amount of time that should be permitted since the last admission for students requesting to be readmitted?
- How much time should a readmitted student receive to complete a degree? There is a policy on readmissions, but no time limits are included in it.

Q: Did the GEC ask programs if students with longer times to graduation are necessary in that field or just the de facto time in the program?

A: The GEC heard that eight years plus one two year extension should be sufficient since some fields require a bit more time to produce quality work.

Q: Does the clock stop for students who are not active in a program?

A: If a student requests a leave of absence (LOA), then the clock stops. However, if a student is not active, meaning not registered, they are terminated after two weeks. In this case, the clock continues to run. If the student applies for readmission, then the Graduate School looks at the time limit from initial matriculation and might mandate that the student also request an extension of the time limit. Without this extension, the student could not be cleared for the award of the degree.

Q: Do we have data from graduate programs on how many students have been affected by the current limits?

A: No as this policy was only put in place four years ago. The previous policy had a five year time limit once the student passed their preliminary oral examination, which meant that the time limits varied greatly by program and student. For students who matriculated before January 1, 2013, they can choose if they will be under the old or current policy.

Q: Is it possible for a program and college to decline readmission to a student but for the Graduate School to override that decision?

A: No. The authority for a readmission rests with the program and college; the Graduate School is only involved with time limits. However, it can be tricky if the program and college say yes and the Graduate School says no due to a time limit issue. So far, no students have passed the 12 year maximum and requested readmission. If a student is between 10-12 years, then the Graduate School engages with the program to make sure that the student can be successful if a time extension is granted.

Q: Eight years to complete a degree sounds reasonable. However, if a program supports an extension, what is the harm to the University?

A: The time limits are a way to encourage programs to provide support to students to complete a degree in a reasonable time. If a student has no time limits, they could be off track and never know. The policy also helps in conversations with advisors.

Q: Does the policy allow programs to set other standards?

A: Yes. The University policy sets the maximum and programs can have more stringent requirements. If programs do have different standards, they need to make those clear to students and to have a rationale behind them.

Q: What happens to a student in the case of an illness?

A: If a student has a medical need to be out of the program, then they should request a leave of absence.

Belinda Cheung noted that if a student is readmitted, the program is allowed to impose new degree requirements. If a student returns from a leave of absence, the program is obligated to take the student back when the student wants to return and cannot impose new degree requirements.

Q: How does this policy compare to peer institutions?

A: When looking at aspirational peers, they are far stricter in their policies and they have many checks along the way. However, Ph.D. completion is a national issue.

Members made the following comments:

- If a student is doing a combined Master's and Ph.D., this means that the time limit to complete the Ph.D. is actually six years instead of eight
 - Belinda Cheung noted that the policy already allows for a program to request a program-wide exemption, but none of the 96 Ph.D. programs has pursued this option
- Policy does allow programs to set more stringent limits for its students
- Some programs can find it challenging to cut off a student who is not making significant progress
- The notion of a completed Ph.D. is arbitrary and varies by program
- Some Ph.D. cases go well beyond the 12 year maximum; if a program cannot be flexible with the completion date, it may result in substandard theses just to beat the maximum time limit
- Ph.D. slots are a finite quantity so there are incentives for programs to bring in a new generation of students and not clog the system with those students who will not graduate
- If a program and the college agree to let students finish who have passed the maximum time limit, then those students should be allowed to complete their degree
- What can the University do to discourage students leaving (e.g. for a job) when they are so close to completing their degree?
- More advising time needs to be spent on program expectations

In conclusion, Professor Thomas said that SCEP's position seemed to be that the current time limits should not be changed, but that a time limit should be added once a student is readmitted.

2. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THREE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Stacey Tidball and Suzanne Bardouche noted that the following three administrative policies have been through comprehensive review this year and now require SCEP's approval.

Awarding Posthumous Degrees

Stacey Tidball said that there were no changes recommended to this policy and there are hardly ever questions about its use.

Q: What is the definition for 'enough' in the policy?

A: The term is not defined by the policy but is left to each college to interpret.

Q: How often is this policy used?

A: Its use is infrequent; there have been no undergraduate requests in the last six to seven months. If the death is sudden, Academic Support Resources does a wonderful job in quickly processing the request so that the diploma is available for the memorial service.

Q: Does a family member have to initiate the request?

A: A family request is not required; the college administration can make the request as well.

A member noted that the Morris policy contact needed to be updated.

The policy was approved as amended.

Educational Materials Conflict of Interest

Suzanne Bardouche said that the most frequent question regarding this policy is simply where to find it.

Q: Does this policy prohibit a faculty member from using a book that they have published in their course?

A: No, but the policy requires approval before it can be used.

Q: How would a policy violation be caught?

A: Typically by a student reporting it. Departments could also check syllabi but that is not done consistently.

Q: Does the policy require that the syllabi include text regarding royalties?

A: No, but some faculty include text as they are sensitive to student concerns.

Q: Do faculty need to report royalty earnings to the University?

A: Yes, if the royalty amount passes a certain threshold.

Q: Is approval to use a book required for any amount of royalty?

A: Yes, since this eliminates the appearance of impropriety.

The policy was approved as presented.

Instructional Time Per Course Credit

Stacey Tidball said that this policy defines instructional time for each course so that it complies with accreditation and federal standards for a credit hour so the course is eligible to be used towards financial aid. The definition of instructional time is not being changed. Instead the policy language is being clarified to address concerns from the accreditation visit last semester.

Suzanne Bardouche said that this policy accompanies the Expected Student Academic Work per Credit policy.

Q: How do flipped or technology-enhanced courses meet instructional time requirements?

A: The University has started conversations on what counts as instructional time in online and blended courses. Typically, the University has been counting scheduled time with the instructor in blended courses versus independent student work time which is similar to homework time.

Leslie Schiff said that during the accreditation visit, syllabi were requested in 26 random courses so that the reviewers could check how credit hours were accommodated in each course. She sees the syllabi for all courses. For blended courses, she is looking for documentation of actual work being done while the class is flipped, not just time to read or complete homework.

Q: Does this policy apply to completely online courses?

A: Yes. It applies to all course offered.

Q: How does this policy affect a course with designated class periods in which students are doing work that needs to take place outside the classroom but when the instructor is still available for questions?

A: Not all courses have similar requirements. This instance would be similar to a lab in which students are doing assigned work. The University just needs to be sure that all courses count towards financial aid and meet accreditation standards.

Q: How are practicums counted?

A: They are covered in #6 Direct education to students is covered by contracts with the providers and the supervised time counts.

Q: Is there a policy to protect students from doing more work per course credit?

A: This would be covered by the Expected Student Academic Work per Credit policy. If students felt that requirements were unreasonable, they would make a report. There are also other checks, such as rooms scheduling and reviewing by the department and central of course syllabi.

Members made the following comments:

- The language in #3 already covers the language in #5
- Policies set minimum and maximum standards
- Language in #5 is not consistent with the rest of the policy
- Examples in #5 are types of classes with less standardization, which can lead to more questions but seem to be a better fit in a FAQ
- At Morris, the current language in #5 was interpreted to mean that those types of courses were automatically exempted from the minimum requirement

It was decided that #5 would be reworked into an FAQ and then the policy would be put up for an online vote.

3. CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID

Vice Provost Robert McMaster started a presentation on tuition and financial aid for undergraduate students at the December meeting. Since that meeting, the Regents have started working on a resolution on enrollment management and tuition. This will be discussed at their meeting in February and voted on in March.

As only half of the information from December was presented, he then referred members back to the slides, highlighting the following points:

- Cost of attendance for this year is roughly \$26,000 for residents and reciprocity students which puts Minnesota in the middle of the Big Ten for in-state cost

- Cost of attendance for non-residents and international students is \$36,000. This amount will change quickly as the Regents are proposing a tuition increase of \$3200/year for four years. The Regents discussed this proposal in December and it will be voted on in June.
- A letter is being sent soon to all current non-resident students to explain the likely price increase starting fall 2016. The University will be offering discounts to current students which will allow them to buy down the increase from the posted rate to a 5.5 percent increase each year until they graduate.
- His office has system-wide responsibility in four areas – compliance, registrar, financial aid, and undergraduate research program (UROP)
- Financial aid for the system is about \$500 million/year with \$342 million for the Twin Cities
- Trend over the last seven years includes increased funding for gifts and waivers, stable employment, and decreasing reliance on subsidized loans
- The University does not have any information on private loans taken out by students or parents
- Backbone of gift aid to students is PELL grants
- Number of students graduating with no debt is increasing
- If students graduating with no debt were included when figuring the average loan debt, the debt amount for all graduates would drop from \$26,000 to \$16,000
- All admitted students are fully package for financial aid even if they do not use it
- UPromise Scholarship is only available to Minnesota residents
- University has fewer students graduating in six year, which means more money saved by graduating sooner.

Q: What is graduate student tuition?

A: Graduate students also have a resident and non-resident rate of \$1320/credit and \$2042/credit respectively. Professional schools have separate rate structures based on market conditions. These programs are reluctant to make additional increases.

Q: Do international students pay more?

A: Not for tuition but they have a \$500/year fee that they pay now and this might also increase.

Q: Where is merit aid counted?

A: In the scholarship and gift aid category if the funds come from the University of Minnesota Foundation.

Q: Why is there a difference between the federal PELL grant maximum and the average disbursement for the University?

A: PELL grants are disbursed on a sliding scale based on the expected family contribution (EFC) from the FAFSA.

Q: What preparation is being provided to incoming students regarding the possible non-resident tuition increase?

A: The tuition discount will be applied to incoming 2016 students as well. It is unknown what the impact will be on the final composition of the incoming class but admissions is adjusting its expectation from 14 percent non-resident this year to something lower next year.

Q: Is the University anticipating more scholarship aid? If yes, from what sources?

A: The University of Minnesota Foundation has made student aid a high priority and had its best year last year. Undergraduate scholarship will be a large part of its new capital campaign that should launch soon.

Q: Do non-resident students have more or less debt upon graduation?

A: Likely less debt as they come from wealthier families who do not need loans or are high achieving students who are recruited with scholarships.

A member noted that as out-of-state tuition increases, the average indebtedness of graduates will also increase

4. OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business, Professor Wick said that the February meeting will be devoted to a discussion of the Graduate Planning and Audit System (GPAS). She then thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate