

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy  
Wednesday, November 19, 2008  
2:00 – 4:00  
238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Cathrine Wambach (chair), Joseph Bartolotta, (George Green for) Gail Dubrow, Megan Evans, April Knutson, James Leger, Richard McCormick, Kristen Nelson, Peh Ng, Jane Phillips, Paul Siliciano, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Erin Sperling, Molly Tolzmann, Michael Wade

Absent: LeAnn Alstadt, Norman Chervany, Shawn Friedland, Robert McMaster, Emily Ronning, Joel Weinsheimer

Guests: none

[In these minutes: policy review: (1) academic unit authority over the curriculum; (2) expected student academic work per credit; (3) faculty role in advising on the curriculum; (4) grading and transcripts; (5) registration (admission to a major, credit enrollment limits per semester, and holds on records and registration); (6) scheduling examinations, final examinations, and study day; (7) directed study; (8) special examinations for credit and proficiency; (9) leaves of absence; (10) suggestions from the Registrar; (11) mandatory attendance at first class session and consequences of absence; (12) course-numbering; (13) enrolling in overlapping and back-to-back classes; (14) role of the Graduate School in policy review]

Professor Wambach convened the meeting at 2:00; the Committee took up redrafted educational policies for review. (Note: policy language appears between the \* \* \*.)

**1. Academic Unit Authority over the Curriculum and Major and Minor Requirements**

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**1. Authority to Establish Requirements**

Subject to the final authority of the Board of Regents, departments, colleges, and campuses have the authority to establish their curricula and the requirements for majors and minors, for graduate and professional degrees, and to add to or remove courses from both in accordance with rules established by the college or campus.

Any change in major requirements may take effect no earlier than the following term and such new requirements will not normally be imposed on currently-enrolled students who have been admitted to the major, but the new requirements may be offered to them as an option. If the faculty of a unit conclude that a new major requirement is essential even for currently-enrolled students, approval of the dean of the college must be obtained for imposing the requirement on current students.

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

See the Leave of Absence and Readmission policy for program requirements for students who leave the University and then return.

## 2. Expiration of Old Credits

In order to ensure that graduating students will be up-to-date in the discipline, an academic unit (a department or comparable unit) may decide not to accept course work towards satisfying requirements for the major or minor if the course was taken too long ago. Any such time limit must be clearly and regularly communicated to prospective and current students.

## 3. Revisions of Courses Required for a Major

Subject to the final authority of the Board of Regents, departments, colleges, and campuses have the authority to eliminate or substantially revise courses required for the major and to eliminate or revise prerequisites for the major in accordance with rules established by the college or campus.

Units must clearly communicate to prospective and current students their policies and decisions regarding new or revised requirements for the major.

\* \* \*

The Committee agreed that there is a difference between a student who is out on a Leave of Absence and one who drops out and later returns. The latter student may be subject to new program requirements, and the decision is up to the department.

## **2. Expected Student Academic Work per Credit**

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Workload expectations in this policy are an estimate of the amount of work needed for an average student to earn an average grade, but course grades are based on the quality of the work submitted, not on hours of effort (as provided in the Grading and Transcript policy, URL).

Undergraduate students

1. Student workload expectations per undergraduate credit. The Faculty Senate affirms the standard (first adopted by the Senate on February 16, 1922) that one credit represents, for the average University of Minnesota undergraduate student, three hours of academic work per week (including lectures, laboratories, recitations, discussion groups, field work, study, and so on), averaged over the term, in order to complete the work of the course to achieve an average grade. Thus, enrollment for 15 credits in a semester represents approximately 45 hours of work per week, on average, over the course of the semester.
2. Exceptions to undergraduate workload standard. Professional norms and the nature of the academic work may necessitate spending more than three hours of work per week on average. For example, clinical experiences, some laboratory work, and some studio activities may require more than an average three hours per week. Demands on the student in excess of the average of three hours per credit per week are permissible with college approval and with appropriate notification

to the student of the amount of work expected for the course or educational experience (e.g., in class schedules, bulletins, or syllabi).

3. Student workload statement required for undergraduate courses. All proposals for undergraduate courses must include a student workload statement demonstrating how the course conforms to the student workload expectations in sections (a) and (b). College and campus curriculum committees and other approving bodies (e.g., the Council on Liberal Education) must consider the student workload statement in reaching a decision on whether to approve a proposed course.

#### B. Graduate School and Professional School students

1. Student workload expectations per Graduate School or professional school credit. It is expected that the academic work required of Graduate School and professional school students will exceed three hours per credit per week.

#### C. All students

1. For courses using one course number that enroll both undergraduate and graduate/professional students, workload expectations may be different for the two.
2. When a course is offered at two levels (e.g., 1xxx/3xxx or 3xxx/5xxx), workload expectations will differ for the students enrolled at different levels.
3. Periodic review of workload requirements. Instructional units should periodically review course syllabi to determine whether the number of course credits is appropriate for the expected student workload.

\* \* \*

The Committee concluded, in response to a recommendation from the Policy Advisory Committee, that it did not wish to remove the reference to the 1922 Senate action. It also concluded that, per advice from the Graduate School, it would not change the language about workload expectations for graduate and professional students. The policy does not set a limit on the workload expected of graduate students but the Committee concluded it could not write a policy that would establish appropriate limits and that programs and schools will set expectations appropriate to their disciplines.

### **3. Faculty Role in Advising on the Curriculum**

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The faculty in each unit are responsible for ensuring that there is an effective advising process. The faculty of every unit will collectively determine the mechanisms by which faculty members will be involved in advising students and will periodically review the effectiveness of that process. In some units faculty may choose to be directly involved in advising individual students. In other units, aspects of the process may be delegated to appropriately-trained and supervised academic professionals, graduate students, or peers. The faculty of each unit must assist in and cooperate with the advising process as appropriate and are responsible for providing timely information about the curriculum and

student performance to advisers. The faculty should encourage students to take advantage of opportunities provided by the advising process to broaden, intensify, and integrate their educational experience.

\* \* \*

The Committee agreed that the title should be changed to Faculty Role in Undergraduate Advising on the Curriculum. It also concluded, in response to a query from the Policy Advisory Committee, that the elaboration of faculty responsibility was sufficient and did not need to include explicit language about ensuring that advising existed, that it was working, and that advisers are doing a good job; the Committee decided that "ensuring there is an effective advising process" encapsulated all of those elements.

#### **4. Grading and Transcripts**

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##### **II. Accountability for Grading and Student Questions About a Grade**

Students in every course must be clearly informed about who is ultimately responsible for assigning grades in the course and from whom they have the right to an explanation for a grade during and after the course. In courses where adjunct faculty who may be affiliated with the University for only a short period of time teach and grade the course, the department or academic unit may assign a regular faculty member to be the responsible person once the course has ended.

For courses with laboratories or sections taught by teaching assistants or similar student staff, the individual responsible for the grades awarded is the faculty member or instructor who is in overall charge of the course. Instructors responsible for a course with multiple sections or laboratories must take reasonable steps to ensure that grading across sections or laboratories is consistent.

All individuals who grade or evaluate student work in a course must have a formal affiliation with the course, whether as instructor of record, TA, paid grader, or other connection.

Students have the right to seek an explanation for a grade for one year following the date the grade is posted to their record. If a student is not able to get an explanation for the grade from the instructor, he or she may consult the director of undergraduate studies or department chair. Students also may seek assistance from the campus student conflict resolution office. The instructor is obligated to provide an explanation for a grade even though not obligated to change it.

\* \* \*

The Committee agreed that the title of this section of the policy should refer to student questions, not an appeal, because grades may not be appealed on the merits. The Committee also affirmed that it wished the language in the fourth paragraph to remain (the version above is the result of suggestions made at the December 4 Faculty Senate meeting and incorporated by the ad hoc policy-review subcommittee, subject to final approval by the Committee).

The Committee then turned to another section of the grading policy:

\* \* \*

Bracketing is the practice of not including a course in the calculation of a student's GPA and not counting the course as satisfying any degree requirements, including electives, because a student has repeated a course. When a student repeats a course, all prior attempts are bracketed and only the most recent attempt counts (except as provided in 6 (c)). No department or college may bracket the courses of another department or college for any reason other than course repetition. A student may not bracket an F with an N. A student may not bracket a University of Minnesota course with a course taken at another institution.

\* \* \*

The Committee agreed that the penultimate sentence in the paragraph should be added. Professor Wambach explained that while bracketing an F with an N does not occur very often, it was an issue that was the subject of several comments when the policy was out for review by the University community. Advisers and others who saw such bracketing happen felt it was a form of academic dishonesty and asked that it be prohibited. (A student who receives an F in a course can re-enroll for the course on the S/N basis, never go to class and not do the work, and earn an N. The F would have counted in the student's GPA; the N does not. With the tuition band, there is no financial penalty to a student for adding the course the next or a following semester.) Professor Wambach suggested the prohibition should be added and the Committee concurred.

## **5. Registration**

This "policy" was an amalgamation of three different items in different policies. The Committee concluded that the amalgamation did not make a great deal of sense and decided to divide it into three separate policies.

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### Admission to a Major

1. Colleges determine how students declare a major or degree program.
2. Department standards are subject to college review and approval. College and campus standards are subject to review and approval by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost or the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences.
3. All freshmen-admitting colleges will have a student status of "undeclared." All students will be required to declare a major or be accepted into a program before or upon the completion of 60 semester credits. Students will be required to declare a major no later than at the end of the term in which they complete 60 or more credits. Once a student has completed 60 credits, he or she will not be allowed to register until he or she declares a major. Once a student has completed 60 credits, advisers shall impose an "adviser hold" on a student's registration until the student has declared a major or been admitted to a program.

### **Credit Enrollment Limits per Semester**

College approval is required for a student to register for 21 or more credits in a semester.

### **Holds on Records and Registration**

Holds may be placed on a student's record, which may mean, among other things, that the student cannot obtain an official copy of his or her transcript and/or cannot register for courses.

1. Advisers may at any stage during a student's undergraduate career impose a hold on the student's record when appropriate for advising purposes.
2. The University may place a hold on a student's record for failure to meet financial obligations to the University.
3. Holds may be placed on a student's record for other reasons determined appropriate by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost and/or Senior Vice President for Health Sciences.

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### **6. Scheduling Examinations, Final Examinations, and Study Day**

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#### **Final examinations**

1. All classes that normally permit undergraduates to enroll will follow the standard examination schedule. Final examinations on the Twin Cities campus will extend over a six-day period. It is not a violation of this policy for a faculty member to use secure online test-taking, authorized by the academic unit, that permits students to take an exam at a time of their choosing rather than at a scheduled final examination time. Coordinate campuses will each determine the length of their final examination period.
2. Final examinations normally will be two (clock) hours long.
3. Instructors may offer take-home final examinations (but see 7(c) below).
4. Instructors may schedule longer examinations with the approval of their department, which will arrange longer use of the examination room with the appropriate campus scheduling office. Instructors and departments must decide in advance of scheduling a course if the examination is to exceed two hours, and must work with the campus office that schedules central classrooms on scheduling the location of the exam. Any examinations that exceed two hours must be noted in the class schedule, in order that students are informed and can try to fit the longer examination in their schedule of final examinations. Accommodation must be provided by the examining department to any student who encounters a conflict with another final examination because of this lengthened examination time.
5. For courses that do not run for a full semester, the final examination will be administered (or due, in the case of take-home or other out-of-class examinations) on the last day of the course, except that short courses that end with the semester may use the final exam time scheduled for that course.

6. The requirement that the final examination period on the Twin Cities campus be six days will not apply to units that have been granted an exemption from the University calendar by the Senate Committee on Education Policy.
7. Final Examinations at Times Other Than Regularly Scheduled.
  - a. Examinations Outside the Final Examination Days Scheduled. Instructors are not permitted to schedule their final examinations outside of the scheduled examination days except under such unusual circumstances as may be approved by the Senate Committee on Educational Policy. Requests to change the time of the final examination must be made to and approved by the dean and reported to the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, the appropriate academic officer on the campus, who will bring them to the Senate Committee on Educational Policy.
  - b. Moving an Examination Within the Final Examination Period. When an instructor and students conclude they wish to move the final examination for the course to a different time and/or day during the final examination period, the change must be (1) proposed by the instructor, (2) have the concurrence of the department chair, and (3) must be approved unanimously by the students, via written secret ballot.
  - c. Laboratory practicums may be given during the final week of classes during the normal lab period, and take-home or other out-of-class finals may be distributed prior to the final exam week but may not be due before the scheduled final exam for that course.
  - d. Students with final examination conflicts, or with three (or more) final examinations in one calendar day, will be expected to notify and provide documentation to instructors as soon as possible during the term. Instructors are expected to make appropriate accommodation to eliminate the conflict. In the event none of the instructors agrees to make appropriate accommodation, the student should contact his or her advisor. If a student has three or more examinations in one day because one exam date was changed, the instructor who changed the exam must make the accommodation. Note: this section does not cover cases where a student has three (or more) examinations within a 24-hour period, only cases where he or she has three (or more) examinations from morning to evening the same day.
  - e. Summer Term Final Examinations. Final examinations for summer terms will be scheduled during the regular meeting time of the course on the last day.

### **Study day**

Each campus will decide whether or not to have a study day; when the calendar permits, a study day should be added to the schedule. For campuses that choose to have one, the final examination period will begin on the second day after classes end, with the day after classes designated as a study day. In the event classes end on a Friday, final examinations will not start until the following Monday.

### **Classes and events during the study day/finals week period**

No classes will be permitted after the last scheduled day of instruction for that term/semester for any course that normally includes undergraduate students. Instructors may not schedule classes on Study Day.

Instructors may not hold a regular class during examination week (which can interfere with students' other exams) and may not hold a class during the first hour of the examination period and then conduct the final examination during the remaining hour(s).

No University-sponsored extra-curricular events which require the participation of students may be scheduled from the beginning of Study Day to the end of Finals Week. Exceptions to this policy may be granted ONLY by the Senate Committee on Educational Policy. Any exception granted pursuant to this policy (that is, with the explicit authorization of the Senate Committee on Educational Policy) will be honored so that students who are unable to complete course requirements during Finals Week as a result of that exception will be provided an alternative and timely opportunity to do so.

### **Special Situations**

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy has the authority to grant waivers to the provisions of this policy, and will report such waivers to the Faculty Senate at its next meeting.

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The problem his department encounters, Professor Siliciano explained, is when other units give 3-hour finals that impinge on their finals. The Committee discussed the issue and concluded that students who find themselves in a 3-hour final that conflicts with another regularly-scheduled final must be given accommodation, and that if necessary Vice Provost McMaster's office is responsible for ensuring that the policy is followed. The FAQ should point to the Provost's office as the place to go if there are problems that departments or colleges will not resolve for the students. If the Provost's office will not enforce the policy, the student gets caught in the middle.

### **7. Directed Study**

The Committee concluded that there is need for a brief policy on directed study/research/readings, primarily to make the point that there must be a written agreement between the instructor and the student about the work to be done. Some colleges have a form that must be filled out before a student may register for directed study/research/readings.

### **8. Special Examinations for Credit and Proficiency**

The Committee discussed whether the policy should be University-wide or determined on a department-by-department basis. Departments control major courses and credits; it may be that if credit is awarded for meeting liberal education requirements, the policy can be campus- or institution-wide, but that departments would decide if credits would be count toward the major.

It was agreed that this policy needed further review by the Provost's office.

## **9. Leaves of Absence**

The Committee agreed that there should be a statement in the policy urging students to see an adviser before leaving the University.

## **10. Suggestions from the Registrar**

The Committee reviewed a number of wording suggestions from Dr. Falkner (who was unable to be present at the meeting) and incorporated them in the policies.

## **11. Mandatory Attendance at First Class Session and Consequences for Absence**

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1. Students must attend the first class meeting of every part of a course in which they are registered (including, for example, labs and discussion sections), unless they obtain prior approval from the instructor (or department, if appropriate) for an intended absence before the first class meeting; without such prior approval, a student may lose his or her place in the class to another student. The registration materials should alert students to the fact that they must attend the first session of a course, whether that session is a lab, discussion section, lecture, or some other class meeting.

2. If a student wishes to remain in a course from which he or she has been absent the first day without prior approval, the student should contact the instructor as soon as possible. In this circumstance, instructors have the right to deny admission to the class if other students have been admitted and the course is full. However, instructors should consider extenuating circumstances (e.g., weather) that may have prevented a student from attending the first class session.

3. Absence from the first class session that falls during a recognized religious holiday (e.g., Rosh Hashanah) does not require instructor approval, but the instructor must be notified of the absence and the reason; in this instance, the place for the student will be retained. (See the Policy Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences.)

4. Students must officially cancel any course for which they have enrolled and subsequently been denied enrollment. Instructors will fail any such student who does not officially cancel a course.

The Committee agreed, in the last sentence, that the word "will" was appropriate, rather than "should."

## **12. Course Numbering**

The Committee agreed to add a statement of purpose for the policy: "The primary purpose of the course numbering system is to help students select and sequence courses. Consistent use of the course numbering system also helps those who view a student's transcript identify the level of courses that appear on the transcript."

**13. Enrolling in Overlapping or Back-to-back Classes**

The Committee agreed to add a statement of purpose to the policy: "Enrolling in overlapping classes is prohibited so students can actually attend the classes in which they enroll. For Twin Cities campus students, back-to-back classes with insufficient travel time may lead them to consistently arrive late or to depart early, which can disrupt a class and cause the student to miss instruction. The policy clarifies that it is the student's responsibility to plan a schedule that allows enough time for travel between classes and that instructors may accommodate student scheduling problems, but are not required to do so. Thus the policy gives instructors the right to penalize students who arrive at class late or leave early."

**14. Role of the Graduate School in Policy Review**

Dean Green noted that the Graduate School has a constitution and an elaborated governance structure with active faculty involvement. He suggested that the graduate faculty is the more appropriate venue for policy review for graduate education and that the policies become confused when they include both undergraduate and graduate students. Professor Wambach suggested that the Graduate School could develop policies applicable only to graduate students and that such policies should appear on the University's policy website. Dean Green said the policies are embedded in the Graduate School constitution and bylaws; Professor Wambach responded that that makes them difficult for students to find.

Professor Wambach adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota