

[In these minutes: Discussion of three proposed changes to the Administrative Policy on Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences, Approval of the Learning Spaces Master Plan, Update from the ROTC Subcommittee, Approval of the scheduling request from the Faculty Academic Oversight Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics, Discussion of amendments to two administrative policies – Credit requirements for Student Earning Graduate/Postbaccalaureate Degrees and Credit Requirements for Master’s and Doctoral Degrees]

EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (SCEP) MINUTES

APRIL 15, 2015

[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.]

PRESENT: Sue Wick (chair), Nicola Alexander, Gifty Amarteifio, Michael Anderson, Elaine Darst, Gayle Golden, Ken Leopold, Keith Mayes, Alon McCormick, Robert McMaster, Tisha Turk.

ABSENT: Erich Beckert, Noah Hall, Rachna Shah.

REGRETS: Karla Hemesath, Lauren Lindquist, Thomas Michaels, Hamza Musse, Savio Poovathingal, Henning Schroeder.

GUESTS: Suzanne Bardouche, Belinda Cheung, Mitch Fuller, Ashley Hall, Joan Howland, Valkyrie Jensen, Leslie Schiff, Kathleen Thomas, Stacey Tidball, Sue Van Voorhis.

1. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY ON MAKEUP WORK FOR LEGITIMATE ABSENCES

Sue Wick noted that the Student Senate had recently approved resolutions proposing changes in the Administrative Policy on Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences dealing with bereavement leave and absence when a dependent does not have school. She invited the proposers of the resolutions to talk with the committee. The last proposed change is one that was brought to her attention.

Excused absence when dependent does not have school

Ashley Hall, a Veterinary Medicine student, said that this year she has been looking at what can be done to help graduate and professional student parents. A few years ago, this policy was amended to allow a provision for when a dependent is sick. However, there are other events for a dependent that can affect the ability of a student parent to attend class. If a graduate/professional parent cannot identify last-minute childcare, then they either have to miss class, which they do not want to do, or bring their child with them. For her, the best example was the large number of snow days last year. Some faculty understood and others were less flexible. For one of the snow days, she was forced to bring her son with her to an exam, which is not a conducive environment in which to take a test.

Suzanne Bardouche said that the policy, as currently written, allows faculty discretion for absences that are not explicitly listed in the policy to cover a range of students and circumstances. The language being presented today includes some events that a student parent knows of in advance, like school vacation days, and therefore child care should be able to be planned in advance. If any non-school day for a dependent was an excused absence, then every student parent would be gone for MEA. The biggest issue with this policy is accommodating all situations, while not obligating instructors and other students to undue hardships.

Members made the following comments:

- University needs to acknowledge that there is a broader group of students who attend now, including student parents,
- Graduate/professional students report struggling with finding affordable child care
- Some students have class obligations that cannot be rescheduled, such as clinicals, performances, and team projects which affect their ability to pass a class
- It can be hard for instructors to accommodate all student requests
- How many student parents are there?
- Instructors know when a student has missed too much class to be successful
- Another issue arising is that many students are now caring for their parents and grandparents. Do these absences need to be accommodated as well?
- What is the instructor's obligation to accommodate the needs of student parents?

Bereavement definition

Mitch Fuller and Valkyrie Jensen, undergraduate students, then discussed an amendment to the policy to deal with bereavement. This change was brought forward after a student mentioned that when his grandmother died, he need four days to attend the funeral in Atlanta. However, he had three exams over the next five days. He spoke to his instructors, but one refused to provide extra time to study and a rescheduled exam which was one-fourth of his grade. This instructor said that he was just following the language in the policy.

The student resolution asks for three days of absence for bereavement with an additional two to four days depending on the distance that the student needs to travel. A student's religious practices are not a component of the amendment. This process is modeled after one that is already in place at Purdue as a way to protect students. They feel that there is little chance for abuse, since instructors can already require proof.

Members made the following comments:

- Language should state that the days being requested are calendar days, not meeting days per class
- Instructors should be encouraged to be sensitive to religious practices and requirements as a student's experience may be different than their own
- List of applicable relationships to the student for which bereavement would apply might be better placed in an FAQ and should be compared to the lists for employees
- SCEP needs to be aware of unintended consequences as any amendment applies to all levels of students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) at four campuses
- Instructor concern is that a student who misses too much class will not be able to meet the objectives. This applies to all types of courses at all levels.

Excused absence for interviews/auditions (graduate/professional school, professional positions)

Sue Wick said that Suzanne Bardouche related an experience from a student who was granted a medical school interview, but then could not receive an excused absence from the instructor in a 1000-level course. Many times, interview dates and times are given to students and there is no chance to request an alternative. If the interview/audition is the normal progression for a student, should they be penalized?

Members made the following comments:

- This list should be shorter to not provide an automatic excuse for any type of interview
- Students should be required to show effort to reschedule to avoid a conflict
- Some instructors receive complaints from other students when an excused absence is granted
- Can this issue be handled in the FAQs?

- More training needs to be done with faculty so that they are aware that they can make accommodations

At the end of the discussion, members felt that legitimate concerns were raised and should be addressed. A subcommittee was put together – Elaine Darst, Gayle Golden, Alon McCormick, Michael Anderson – to work with Suzanne Bardouche over the summer on possible revisions.

[Following the meeting, the three students who presented to SCEP were also asked to serve on the subcommittee.]

2. APPROVAL OF THE LEARNING SPACE MASTER PLAN RESOLUTION FROM THE CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE

Kevin Smith presented a resolution for SCEP's approval on funding a Learning Spaces Master Plan (LSMP).

Q: How will funding be provided?

A: OCM has discussed funding for a half-time position to lead this effort and the Provost's Office has assembled a committee to start the discussion. CAS would be briefed on this effort and could provide updates to SCEP as needed.

Sue Van Voorhis said that OCM received increased funding for the past few years. They will be cut this year but it will not be significant.

Q: What will be generated by this resolution?

A: The 2009 campus master plan is still used for planning, but does not include much about learning spaces. The resolution mandates that learning spaces are discussed for all construction projects.

Q: Are there enough classrooms?

A: An updated inventory would allow OCM to make that determination since descriptors and terms have changed. Study space also needs to be a recognized component of learning spaces.

With no further discussion, the resolution was approved.

3. UPDATE FROM THE ROTC SUBCOMMITTEE

Joan Howland, chair of the ROTC Subcommittee, said that the main function of the subcommittee is to review faculty appointments to the ROTC program since they teach a limited number of courses for credit. The appointment process is vigorous as only senior military leaders with higher education degrees are proposed. Subcommittee members also attend ROTC events throughout the year.

There are 200 cadets on campus – 125 through the Army, 30 through the Air Force, and 45 through the Navy and Marines. These students are fulfilling all the goals of the University:

- Most graduate in four years, except those double-majoring
- 80 percent graduate with a STEM degree, other popular degrees are nursing and foreign languages
- Leave college with a job and career path in place
- Diverse pool from many categories – economic, racial, cultural, and first-generation

She then alerted members to one issue for the ROTC program, its facility. The Armory is the seventh oldest building on campus, built in 1907, and has a rich history of involvement with the military. However, there have been no significant improvements since the 1930s and parts of the building are unusable due to lead and asbestos contamination. The ROTC classes are held early and late in the day, with other courses being able to use two OCM rooms mid-day. However the rooms are very outdated and have no technology. CCE also has offices in the building, so this is the first impression that returning students have of the University. This building does not belong to any department or dean, so she is asking for SCEP's assistance to make progress on securing funding or getting it added to the project list for capital request and capital planning .

Q: Could safety issues be used as leverage to make updates?

A: Possibly since there is no elevator in the building and contaminants can be an issue.

Q: What is the estimated life of the building without repairs?

A: That is not known.

Members made the following comments:

- Funding ideas include a capital campaign and approaching donors who are veterans
- Funding would need to be a priority for the Foundation
- Minnesota Daily should be approached about writing a story
- There is space in the building that could be used for classrooms if renovations are made

Members said that they would consider a resolution brought forward by the subcommittee.

4. APPROVAL OF THE SCHEDULING REQUEST FROM THE FACULTY ACADEMIC OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ON INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Sue Wick said that she met with the chair of the Faculty Academic Oversight Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics (FAOCIA) and representatives from athletics to hear about a scheduling issue for December 2015. That semester, exams do not end until December 23. The basketball programs are required to play a certain number of games each year to maintain NCAA eligibility. Due to the semester schedule and holidays, FAOCIA is asking for an exemption for the Women's basketball program to have a game start the afternoon of December 23, prior to the end of exams, per the Policy on Scheduling (<http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/athletics/scheduling.pdf>). She noted that no Women's basketball players would be eligible to play if they had an exam scheduled during the time of the game. She then asked if SCEP is willing to approve the request.

Q: When was the last scheduling request approved?

A: It has been at least 20 years since an exemption was granted.

Members voted to approve the request, but stated that it was only being done based on the exceptional nature of the final exam schedule for fall semester 2015 and that it should not set a precedent.

5. DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF AMENDMENTS TO TWO ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Kathleen Thomas, member of the Graduate Education Council (GEC), said that she is serving on the subcommittee to review the graduate policies that are going through comprehensive review. She then explained the changes being proposed in each policy.

Credit Requirements for Master's and Doctoral Degrees

The edits that were made to this policy are clerical in nature and do not represent major changes. The subcommittee discussed pre-thesis credits and felt that they were still useful within some departments.

Q: What is the purpose of the policy?

A: The policy describes how a program can set degree requirements. The policy does not govern how students apply their credits.

Q: What is the rationale for allowing students to take Master's thesis credits for Plan A at any time during their program under 1(c)?

A: This language occurs in the existing policy. It is meant to not add barriers for students who start work towards a PhD. and then change to a Master's program.

Q: Does this policy allow a Ph.D. student to accumulate pre-thesis credits, and then have them applied to a Master's degree if the student chooses to change their path?

A: Departments can approve students to take 8888 courses at anytime in a program. There is a mechanism to drop some course credits and add other credits appropriate to a degree to meet program requirements.

Q: Should registering for thesis credits early in a program require approval of the program and/or advisor?

A: There is no way to mandate this change unless registration requires a prerequisite.

Q: What is the purpose of thesis credits?

A: It is a way for a student to demonstrate time and effort in their research leading to the thesis. It also accounts for faculty advising time during production of a thesis. There is no credit hour correspondence for these credits.

Q: Is there a benefit to early registration for thesis credits?

A: Early registration can help a student avoid a delay in graduation. If a student must finish coursework in order to register for these credits, it can add an extra semester.

Members made the following comments:

- Thesis credits should be taken after a student has learned the foundational material to do a meaningful thesis, which is not possible if credits are taken in the first semester
- Some students take courses before they are officially enrolled in the program
- A student cannot defend their thesis until they have completed their foundational coursework
- Some undergraduate students are research-ready when they start a program
- Language should be added to state that a program can add further credit requirements for a degree, since this policy only describes the minimum numbers needed
- Statement in 1(c) does not fit the other statements in that section; it should be removed from Section 1 and added to a new section

Credit Requirements for Students Earning Graduate/Postbaccalaureate Degrees

The changes to this policy are greater, including the new name. The intent is to clarify how and where credit requirements are earned. There was an issue in which a student earning a Master's

degree in one program would say that their credits should also be applied to another program, thereby earning a second Master's degree with little extra effort. The new language makes it more difficult to double-count credits as it requires a minimum number of credits be unique to a degree.

The policy also applies consistent standards for all transfer credits, whether from inside or outside the University. It provides programs the authority to decide how many previously-earned credits can be applied to a University degree while still maintaining a minimum number to be earned at the University.

The policy sets the minimum for all programs, but the requirements can be increased. The policy does not apply to already-approved, existing dual-degree programs that have been approved by the Regents to have specific, different credit requirements.

Q: Does this policy include professional degrees?

A: It does not apply to first professional degrees, but it does cover some postbaccalaureate degrees. The policy needs to be explicit about what degrees it does and does not cover.

Q: Will this policy allow undergraduate credits to apply to a graduate degree?

A: Yes but the policy still requires that a student take some degree credits while enrolled as a graduate student.

Q: Do courses taken as an undergraduate and then applied to a graduate degree appear on both transcripts?

A: No. The graduate degree plan records courses required to meet degree requirements. Credits taken as an undergraduate remain on that transcript and are not moved to the graduate transcript. Accreditation requires that the undergraduate degree include at least 120 credits -- moving the course would leave the undergraduate transcript with less than the required credits. Also, to move the credits to the graduate transcript, they would have to be transferred but the University cannot serve as its own transfer institution.

Sue Van Voorhis noted that several years ago undergraduate admissions discontinued adding transfer credit totals to the academic record and graduate admissions did not have the staff to continue this process. This does not meet national recommendations by American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) as all requirements of the degree plan should be reflected. Academic Support Resources will take over this function.

Members made the following comments:

- The last sentence of Section 1(a)(i) should state "previously awarded undergraduate or graduate degree"
- Policy needs to explicitly state to which programs it applies

6. OTHER BUSINESS

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

Becky Hippert
University Senate