

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
January 25, 2017
Minutes of the Meeting**

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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.

[In these minutes: Undergraduate Policies; Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences Policy - Continued Discussion; Joint Task Force for Student Mental Health Update; Liberal Education Planning Update]

PRESENT: Sue Wick (chair), Nicola Alexander, Michael Anderson, Rani Bezanson, Elaine Darst, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Gayle Golden, Jennifer Goodnough, Vedant Goyal, Scott Lanyon, Keith Mayes, Lauren Mitchell, Rachna Shah, Brian Sick

REGRETS: William Dammann, Michelle Dobbratz, Kenneth Leopold, Bob McMaster, Nevin Young

GUESTS: Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance, Academic Support Resources; Angela Bowlus, assistant director of advising, College of Liberal Arts Advising and Student Support Services

OTHERS: Rilyn Eischens, student reporter, Minnesota Daily; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education

1. Undergraduate Policies

Leave of Absence and Readmission for Undergraduates Policy

Chair Sue Wick welcomed Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance, Academic Support Resources. She began with discussion of the [*Leave of Absence and Readmission for Undergraduates Policy*](#). Tidball introduced Angela Bowlus, assistant director of advising, College of Liberal Arts Advising and Student Support Services, who was present to discuss the policy in relation to advising. Bowlus explained that the drivers behind the proposed changes were the financial aid impacts of taking a leave of absence, as well as updating the process in order to gather better data on students' motivations for taking leaves, their return rates, etc. Regarding financial aid, she said that if a student takes courses elsewhere while on a leave of absence from the University of Minnesota, they may not be eligible for financial aid at the other institution. Also, depending on the type of aid, sometimes the four-year limit on some aid includes any leaves of absence, so that effectively, taking a leave minimizes the amount of aid a student can use.

Wick asked how many students go on leaves of absence, and Tidball said that on the Twin Cities campus, about 100-150 students return from leaves each term. She did not have data on how many students go on leave, but it is probably more than are returning each semester. Bowlus added that leaves were more common in the past, when the financial aid impacts were less understood. Now, there is better advising around when to take a leave of absence-- students are advised to take a leave only if they plan to return, and if they do not plan to use financial aid at another institution during the leave. Additionally, students are no longer able to initiate a leave of absence by simply filling out and submitting a form; they are now required to meet with their

advisor in order to get permission to go on leave. Furthermore, during a student's leave, they maintain semesterly contact with their advisor, so the advisor stays up to date on the student's plans as far as timeline to return, degree plans, etc.

Brian Sick noted that the policy states that leaves may not exceed two years. He asked whether that refers to two consecutive years, or total time away. Tidball said that it should be two years total, but that there are exceptions to that limit, including mandatory Korean military deployment, which often lasts over two years.

Michael Anderson asked whether there will be any revisions to the readmission aspect of the policy. Bowlus said that proposed changes to this section are requiring contact with the college before a student can be readmitted, as often a student does not return when expected, or their degree plans have changed while they were on leave. It is helpful for advisors to know this upon readmission, in order to facilitate effective advising.

Jennifer Goodnough asked about the term "re-admission" and whether students who take leaves of absence must formally reapply to the University. Tidball said that they do not have to reapply, so the term "readmission" is misleading. A terminology change has been proposed to address this-- the term "return to active status" has been proposed, but that terminology may not make sense to students, said Tidball. Another suggestion was "reactivation." Goodnough expressed concern about the clause stating, "readmission may be denied based on crimes or other serious misconduct occurring during the leave that would have been grounds for suspension or expulsion had the student engaged in the conduct while enrolled." She said she worried about the student's due process being threatened under these circumstances. Tidball said that there has not been a formal process for gathering this information nor acting on it, since criminal background questions are embedded in the admissions process, and students on leaves do not have to go through the admissions process. She clarified that although the felony question has been taken off the application, questions on sexual misconduct and academic dishonesty remain. Bowlus added that they would like to establish a process to work with Admissions on this, and to ensure that such reviews go through the proper channels, rather than falling to the colleges. Tidball said that the Office of the General Counsel has said that students need to answer these questions when returning to the University. Students disclosing sexual misconduct or academic dishonesty upon returning from a leave of absence would be subject to the same process as applicants, which includes a review by a committee.

Lauren Mitchell asked a question regarding the fourth question in the FAQ. The FAQ states, "a student on an approved leave of absence can take courses at another institution during the leave. However, a student on leave from one University of Minnesota campus is not permitted to take classes at another University of Minnesota campus during the leave." Mitchell wondered why students are not allowed to take courses on another system campus during a leave. Tidball said that would not be considered a leave, but a multi-U situation. Mitchell said that made sense but suggested clarifying it in the FAQ.

Keith Mayes wondered how a student knows, currently, to apply for a leave. Bowlus said information about leaves of absence has been added to [One Stop](#). Mayes then asked what happens when a student just stops enrolling without telling anyone? Tidball said this is

considered a withdrawal. Mayes asked if, should that student decide to return, they are subject to new program requirements. Bowlus said that they are, and that students on leaves of absences could technically also be subject to new program requirements. However, she said, most colleges honor the program requirements the student was under at the time they left.

Wick asked whether students need to reapply after a suspension. Bowlus said no, they submit a petition to their college. Wick asked if students can do a retroactive withdrawal, if they face suspension for academic reasons that turn out to be the result of a medical or mental health issue. Bowlus said yes, this is possible and common.

Tidball offered to clarify what is meant by “re-admission” in the document, and the committee will take an electronic vote on the changes.

Grading and Transcripts

Next, Tidball gave a brief summary of last meeting’s discussion on the *Grading and Transcripts Policy*, and invited further discussion of the proposed change in lapse time for Incomplete (I) grades. The suggestion is to shorten the time that undergraduate students have to resolve an I. Currently, students have one year to resolve an I. If they do not do so, it lapses to an F. However, if the student petitions, the instructor can change the grade back to an I and give them another year. If it lapses and is changed to an F again, but the student still wants to resolve it, the instructor can petition with the college to do a grade change. This extended timeline allows students plenty of time to resolve I grades, but it can also lead to problems if the student forgets about the I or becomes too distanced from the material, or the instructor leaves the University before it is completed. In the latter case, if there is a contract between the instructor and student and the student (or better, the advisor) has a copy, it is much easier, but often there is no written contract or it is in an email that is not forwarded to the advisor.

Tidball shared the following chart, which compares the time to resolve I grades at the University’s peer institutions:

<i>Chicago</i>	<i>one year</i>
<i>Illinois</i>	<i>8th week of next term</i>
<i>Indiana</i>	<i>one year</i>
<i>Iowa</i>	<i>end of the next full semester</i>
<i>Maryland</i>	<i>End of the next term, but allows for a 1-year maximum</i>
<i>Michigan</i>	<i>4th week of next term</i>
<i>Michigan State</i>	<i>middle of next term of attendance</i>

<i>Nebraska</i>	<i>end of the next full semester</i>
<i>Northwestern</i>	<i>end of next term</i>
<i>Ohio State</i>	<i>6th week of next term</i>
<i>Penn State</i>	<i>10th week of next term</i>
<i>Purdue</i>	<i>one year</i>
<i>Rutgers</i>	<i>set deadlines, approx. 1 quarter + one month</i>
<i>Wisconsin</i>	<i>4th week of next term</i>

Wick observed that there are three kinds of work that a student can need to make up: exams, term paper/assignments, and group work/labs. Exams and papers are easy enough to make up, but group work may require waiting until the course is offered again so the student can join in a group. The timeline would need to account for that, she said. Tidball acknowledged this possibility but said that the majority of cases involve exams or papers that need to be completed. The policy could be written to either be broad enough to accommodate both types, or be written for the majority of cases, with the caveat that exceptions can be made in the case of a student needing to wait until the next time a course is offered to participate in a certain experience. However, she said, an additional challenge with the latter exists: due to liability issues, students are not allowed to attend a course for which they are not registered, even on a short term basis. Therefore, situations like the one above would require the student to register for the course again and pay tuition for it again. Tidball said that the work to resolve an I does not have to be the exact same work done in the classroom, but can be a comparable assignment. Elaine Darst asked whether liability is an issue if a student makes up a lab assignment while classes are not in session, and Tidball said she suspected yes, but could consult with OGC to get a definitive answer. Goodnough wondered if the liability issue would be less of a problem if a written contract between the student and instructor were in place; Tidball offered to check on this, as well. Wick observed that the policy stipulates that an I does not guarantee the student the ability to register for the class during a subsequent semester and noted that this seemed to conflict with the fact that the student must register in order to attend a course.

Mayes asked whether Tidball had been in conversation with the peer institutions with shorter lapse times to see how well it was working. She said that it had been discussed at past registrars' conferences, but that she could reach out for further information. Mayes then asked how many students get I grades, and is it frequent that a student has multiple I grades in one semester. If a student is having to complete several courses in a given term, this would be an argument for a longer time frame, he said. Tidball did not have this information on hand but offered to obtain it.

Wick proposed making a written contract for Incompletes required within the policy, and specifying that the student's advisor must also receive a copy of the contract. Members agreed that this was a good idea. Rachna Shah added that it should be required to include the terms of completion-- what the student has to do to resolve the I-- in the contract. Tidball said there is no space for that in PeopleSoft currently, but it can be required as a matter of policy. She also said this would be helpful for advisors, as they would know if a student is working on an I while also taking other classes, and advise them accordingly about their workload. Goodnough noted that Morris already has such a form, and Tidball said that several Twin Cities colleges do, as well.

Many members said they were in favor of shortening the lapse time, and proposed six months.

2. Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences Policy - continued discussion

Next, discussion turned to the proposed addition of a FAQ addressing late registration to the [*Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences Policy*](#). This addition was proposed by Michael Huyen, ombudsman, Student Conflict Resolution Services, in order to address cases where students register for a course after the course has begun (which University policy allows), and the instructor refuses to let them make up work missed during the time they were not yet enrolled. In general, members approved of the proposed wording, with some minor changes. The major point of discussion was proposed wording recommending that students sit in on courses they plan to join if the opportunity arises. However, Tidball pointed out that the same liability issue with students sitting in on courses for which they have not registered as discussed above exists in this situation. Therefore, that wording was removed from the proposed FAQ. After some other small wording changes and adjustments, the following wording was approved by a voice vote:

How does this policy apply to students who register late for a course (registration allowed without permission during first week of classes, and with instructor permission during second week)?

Students should immediately contact the instructor of any course they plan to add after the course has started. Instructors who plan to hold students accountable to make up work they missed before they were registered should inform the students of this when they approve registration, and inform the student if it will not be possible to make up some of the work (for instance, missing a quiz whose answers were already released to students, or missing an assessment on material that subsequently was examined in detail). If a class has graded work during the first two weeks of the term, and especially if some of the graded work will not be possible for a student to make up, noting this in the syllabus and class notes would be helpful, especially if late registrants are common in the course.

Tidball also reminded members that it is possible to set up a class to disallow late registration without a permission number, if it is not possible to make up the work that takes place during the first week.

3. Joint Task Force for Student Mental Health Update

Wick updated the committee on the work of the Joint Task Force for Student Mental Health (JTFSMH). She reminded members that she, Gayle Golden, and Lauren Mitchell are on the task force, and its charge is to look into how instructors can contribute to a good student mental health. The task force has come up with five recommendations that they will present to the

Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) and to Provost Karen Hanson. Three of these recommendations concern mainly faculty; one is aimed at departments and units, and the last one is aimed at University leaders. A preview of the recommendations will be presented to the Board of Regents at their meeting on February 9, 2017. After presenting the recommendations to the provost and the FCC, the task force will hold a series of open meetings on the subject. Some of these will relate to professional development for faculty.

4. Liberal Education Planning Update

Wick reminded members that she, Keith Mayes, Ken Leopold, and Gayle Golden are part of a liberal education pre-planning group that is tasked with deciding whether the University's liberal education requirements should be updated. If it is determined that they should, a separate committee will be formed to propose the modifications. This group will be holding several fora, in order to gather input from the University community regarding liberal education requirements. These fora will also include the system campuses as well as the Minnesota State University (MSU) system. Since about $\frac{1}{3}$ of University of Minnesota students are transfer students, many from those two sources, any changes to the liberal education requirements would need to sync with MSU and the system campuses. The first of these listening session is on Monday, January 30th, 2017. At this session, members of the pre-planning committee will spread out amongst tables. Each table will have a trained student reporter tasked with capturing the feedback from all participants. The next listening session will take place on the St. Paul Campus.

Hearing no further business, Wick adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office