

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, November 4, 2009
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Cathrine Wambach (chair), Joseph Bartolotta, LeAnn Alstadt, Norman Chervany, Megan Evans, Kaleb Kalinowski, James Leger, Richard McCormick, Robert McMaster, Cody Mikl, Kristen Nelson, Peh Ng, Jane Phillips, Peggy Root, Paul Siliciano, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Elaine Tarone

Absent: Michael Wade

Guests: Tina Falkner (Office of the Registrar); Associate Dean Judith Buchanan, School of Dentistry

Other: Karen Zentner Bacig (Office of the Provost)

[In these minutes: (1) revision of teaching-awards policy; (2) grading and transcripts policy: No W if a student is accused of academic misconduct; (3) grade due date clarification; (4) classes on University holidays; (5) legitimate absences from final examinations; (6) other matters; (7) the D grade in Dentistry]

1. Revision of Teaching-Awards Policy

Professor Wambach convened the meeting at 2:00 and reminded the Committee that when the educational policies were revised, the teaching-awards policy was not. She, along with Mss. Evans and Phillips, prepared a revised version, copies of which were provided to the Committee.

Professor Ng noted that Ms. Phillips had inquired about the extent to which the work of the award winners was publicized. Professor Wambach said she has encouraged the University to feature award-winning faculty on its home page, which it does periodically. The winners have plaques on the Scholars Walk. It would be helpful if their work were published so that the material could help others, Ms. Phillips commented, rather than just biographies posted somewhere. Dr. Bacig reported that some Academy of Distinguished Teachers (ADT) members agreed to be resources for others a few years ago but the effort has not been utilized by many as a resource; Dr. Hernandez in the Provost's office is trying to identify ways they can be helpful. Ms. Phillips suggested there be a link to the ADT website from One-Stop.

Committee members turned to the draft revisions and suggested editorial changes. It was agreed that the number of awards per college would be discussed at a later meeting and would be put in an FAQ. The Committee then voted unanimously in favor of the revised policy.

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AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION

The University of Minnesota recognizes teaching excellence with two awards: The Horace T. Morse-Minnesota Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education and the Award for Outstanding Contributions to Post-Baccalaureate, Graduate and Professional Education. Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty from all colleges of the University of Minnesota system are eligible to receive the award.

The Horace T. Morse-Minnesota Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education is granted annually to exceptional candidates and reflects the University's emphasis on the importance of high-quality undergraduate education. It also contributes to the improvement of undergraduate education at the University by publicizing the work of the award-winners to serve as a resource for the whole faculty.

The Award for Outstanding Contributions to Post-Baccalaureate Graduate and Professional Education is granted annually to faculty members who engage post-baccalaureate, graduate, and professional students in a community of intellectual inquiry, who are significant mentors and role models for graduate and professional students, and who develop and promote activities which help students understand the larger context of their intended professions. The honor is awarded to exceptional candidates in recognition of outstanding performance in post-baccalaureate, graduate, and professional education in the following areas: excellence in instruction; involvement of students in research, scholarship and professional development; development of graduate or professional instructional programs; and advising and mentoring.

Procedure for Granting the Awards

1. The Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) annually appoints two nominating committees: one reviews nominees for the Morse-Alumni award and recommends recipients to SCEP and the other reviews nominees for the Graduate/Professional award and recommends recipients to SCEP. SCEP approves the final slate of award winners.
2. Colleges forward the names of candidates for the awards to the nominating committees. Each college is invited to forward a limited number of candidates based on its size. Information about the number of candidates a college can nominate and the type of information required in the nomination dossier is provided by the Provost's office.
3. For each award, the names of up to eight faculty members may be submitted to SCEP by the nominating committees.
4. No individual may receive the Graduate/Professional award and the Morse-Alumni award in the same year. Faculty members may receive both awards during their careers, but may receive each award only once.
5. SCEP has the authority to establish operational details associated with the granting of the Morse-Alumni and Graduate/Professional awards and will report annually on those details to the Senate for information.

Honors Associated with the Awards

1. Each recipient of each award receives a continuous augmentation in their salary, the amount of which is recommended by SCEP and approved by the President.
2. The department of each recipient of either award receives non-recurring funding for the award recipient's use in developing teaching materials and training in order to promote excellence in teaching among all of the faculty, the amount and duration of which is recommended by SCEP and approved by the President.
3. The winners of each award will serve as members of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers.
4. Award winners will be honored at an annual award ceremony, a large public event to which the students and colleagues of the winners will be invited. This event is in addition to any smaller events sponsored by the President, Provost, Board of Regents, colleges, or alumni.
5. All faculty members who have been awarded Morse-Amoco or Morse-Alumni or Graduate/Professional teaching awards will be designated throughout their careers at the University of Minnesota as "Morse-Alumni Distinguished Teaching Professor of [field]" or "Graduate/Professional Distinguished Teaching Professor of [field]," as appropriate. This title can be used in correspondence, on business cards, and wherever else appropriate.
6. Any faculty member who has received either award will be designated by an asterisk and accompanying footnote in the appropriate University publications.

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Professor Wambach turned next to Dr. Falkner, who has been meeting with college offices and brought to the Committee three issues.

2. Grading and Transcripts: No W if a Student is Accused of Academic Misconduct

The first issue Dr. Falkner brought addressed whether a student can withdraw from a class when he or she has been accused of academic misconduct. She proposed adding language to the grading policy that explicitly states that a student cannot withdraw from a class to avoid allegations of or sanctions associated with academic misconduct.

Dr. Falkner recalled that a few years ago, the Student Academic Integrity Committee discussed ways to impede students' ability to avoid the consequences of academic misconduct. CLA, CBS, and the Morris campus already have policies that bar a student from withdrawing from a course (thus receiving a W rather than an F or an N) when accused of academic misconduct. Her proposal makes that policy University-wide.

Professor Chervany asked what happens when a student withdraws before the allegation of misconduct is made. The Registrar's office can re-enroll the student in the course, Dr. Falkner said. Professor Chervany said the policy needs to be very specific that if a student withdraws and the academic misconduct is discovered later, the student can be re-registered for the course and given the

appropriate grade. Ms. Alstadt agreed that if a student is found to have done something questionable, he or she should be reprimanded.

Vice Provost McMaster wondered how the issue would come up after a student has withdrawn from the course. Ms. Phillips said this is related to the provision in the grading policy allowing instructors to award an F or an N to a student for cheating. And that is left entirely up to the instructor, Dr. Falkner added. Dr. McMaster queried the advisability of re-registering a student for a course: a student is accused, the process does not come to a conclusion until the following semester, and the student is found innocent—but in the meantime the student has had to complete a class which he or she legitimately wanted to withdraw from. But perhaps this is so infrequent it need not be considered, he concluded. Dr. Falkner reported that her office will only re-register a student for a course if the college requests that they do so—it is up to the college.

Professor Chervany followed up on Dr. McMaster's point: It is a big penalty for a student who is found innocent but was forced to re-enroll for a course. And because of the accusation, Professor McCormick pointed out, the "water is poisoned" and the student will have an adversarial relationship with the instructor. That assumes the student is guilty, Dr. McMaster said; the process could drag out. The student would just not attend class, Ms. Alstadt said. Mr. Kalinowski said that although the vast majority of cases would find the student responsible for academic misconduct, this process assumes the student is guilty.

Ms. Phillips observed that the CBS policy only comes into play when the student would have earned an F or an N for the course—it applies in only the most egregious cases. Professor Chervany said that if the policy only comes into play when the course grade is in question, and not an allegation about a single assignment, then it is less of a worry. If a student drops a class because of allegations about one assignment, Ms. Phillips said, the instructor is expected only to send a note to the office of student academic integrity for the campus.

Mr. Bartolotta asked at what point a charge becomes an allegation, leading to an investigation and a resolution. Are the investigations uniform? Does the student have an advocate? If the outcome can be a grade sanction, the student is entitled to due process, Ms. Phillips said, and the student may appeal. The process starts at the point the faculty member decides to impose a grade sanction. The process starts only if the student does not accept the sanction, Dr. Falkner clarified. The idea behind her proposal, she reiterated, is to stop students from avoiding the consequences of cheating by withdrawing.

Professor Leger said he was bothered that the proposal would be restricted to instances when a student would receive an F or an N; what about the instance when an instructor proposes giving a D grade? Professor Ng said she had never heard of an instructor allowing a student to earn a D because of scholastic dishonesty. The student is always given an F or an N. Dr. Falkner said that is entirely up to the instructor; some say they will automatically lower the grade by one letter if a student is caught cheating. That is the real problem, Professor McCormick said: the sanctions can range from nothing to an F, depending on the instructor. He said he supports academic freedom, but if there is to be a University policy on academic integrity, there should be a standard for instructors to follow. Professor Leger agreed and said that in the cases he has seen, academic misconduct spans a large spectrum from the very minor to the very major. But that may be irrelevant, Professor McCormick concluded, because the proposal is a good one because at present the most egregious cases could go unpunished.

Dr. McMaster also pointed out that instructors have complete discretion in how they assign grades, so it would be dangerous to try to step into the process of determining academic misconduct.

Any student can appeal, Ms. Phillips pointed out, and the policy language calls for a reasonable response to an offense. The President's Student Behavior Review Panel, on which she has served, tried to set up a matrix of academic misconduct and found it impossible; in her college, CBS, they are going to set up a committee to advise faculty members when they encounter academic misconduct. The committee will not filter information going to the academic integrity office, she affirmed, and it will be quick, with only a couple of days for turnaround.

The Committee subsequently agreed via email on the following new policy language:

If the instructor determines that a grade of F or N for the course should be awarded to a student because of scholastic dishonesty, the student cannot withdraw to avoid the F or N. If the student withdrew from the course before the scholastic dishonesty was discovered or before the instructor has concluded that there was scholastic dishonesty, and the instructor (or the appellate body if the student appeals) determines that the student should receive the F or the N, the student will be re-registered for the course and the F or N grade will be entered on the transcript.

The language will be brought to the Faculty Senate, through the Faculty Consultative Committee, for a final vote.

3. Grade Due Date

The next change Dr. Falkner proposed was clerical: one policy requires that grades be turned in within three business days of the date of the final examination for the course; another requires that grades be turned in within three business days of the end of the final examination period. The latter is correct.

The Committee agreed unanimously without discussion to the change.

4. Classes on University Holidays

The last change Dr. Falkner brought was a proposal to bar classes on University holidays. One instructor last summer insisted on holding class on the Fourth of July. She suggested that the scheduling policy include language providing that classes may not be held on official university holidays.

What about groups of students who are out of the country and not following the University calendar, Professor Nelson asked? The policy applies to classes on campus, Dr. Falkner said. Professor Root said that the Academic Health Center would have to be exempt because there are students on rotations even on holidays. And there are animals that require care as part of instruction, which also must take place on holidays. What about online courses, Dr. Falkner asked—is it expected they would be delivered on a University holiday?

Dr. McMaster suggested adopting the language Dr. Falkner proposed, which will cover the vast majority of the cases, and the exceptions can be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The Committee agreed unanimously, and included language providing that exceptions to the rule can be granted by the dean of the college.

5. Legitimate Absences from Final Examinations

The Committee reviewed, and unanimously approved, a revision to the Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences policy to extend it to cover final examinations [new language is IN CAPS; deleted language is struck out]:

1. Students will not be penalized for absence during the semester OR FINALS WEEK due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. Such circumstances include verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events (BUT SEE THE POLICY INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC EVENTS DURING STUDY DAY AND FINALS WEEKS: TWIN CITIES, WHICH PROHIBITS INTERCOLLEAGIATE ATHLETIC COMPETITION DURING STUDY DAY AND FINALS WEEK EXCEPT UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES), subpoenas, jury duty, military service, bereavement, and religious observances. Such circumstances also include activities sponsored by the University if identified by the senior academic officer for the campus or his or her designee as the basis for excused absences. Such circumstances do not include voting in local, state, or national elections.
2. It is the responsibility of students to plan their schedules to avoid excessive conflict with course requirements.
3. A student must notify instructors of circumstances identified in (1) as soon as possible and provide documentation to the instructor to verify the reason for the absence. In the event that the University declares a pandemic emergency (e.g., flu), the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost or designee may waive the requirement that students are required to have documentation from a physician for illness.
4. If a student is absent due to circumstances identified in (1) and has complied with the notification requirement, the instructor may not penalize the student and must provide reasonable, ~~and~~ timely, AND MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE accommodation or opportunity to make up exams or other course requirements that have an impact on the course grade. FAILURE TO ARRIVE AT A MUTUALLY-ACCEPTABLE ACCOMMODATION WILL BE AJUDICATED BY A DESIGNATED COLLEGE OFFICIAL; SUCH ADJUDICATION SHOULD TAKE PLACE WITHIN THREE DAYS OF THE DATE THE COLLEGE OFFICIAL RECEIVES THE MATTER.
5. The authority to determine what constitutes an excusable bereavement absence and religious observance rests with the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

6. Instructors are encouraged to accommodate students who wish to participate in party caucuses, pursuant to Board of Regents resolution [See <http://www1.umn.edu/regents/minutes/2005/december/board.pdf>, p. 147]

7. This policy ~~does not apply to final examinations~~ APPLIES TO ALL COURSE REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING THE FINAL EXAMINATION IF IT IS PART OF THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS.

8. Colleges and academic units may establish specific criteria for notice and completion of work to implement this policy.

6. Other Matters

Professor Wambach asked Committee to think about several matters for upcoming meetings:

- the language of the teaching-evaluation policy and what a student should do if an instructor does not hand out the student-rating forms. What would be the right process?
- ethics in teaching: is it possible for teaching to do harm (rather than, at worst, doing no good)?
- interpretation of the mandatory first-day attendance rule to exclude students who want to add a class after the first day of classes (even if there is space available).

In the case of the second bullet, Professor Wambach said she will distribute an article to the Committee. In the case of the third, Dr. McMaster pointed out that it is up to the department to determine course access, and it could close registration for a course after the first day. That is correct, Professor Wambach said, but is not in the spirit of allowing access and allowing students to cancel and add classes early in the semester.

7. The D Grade in Dentistry

Professor Wambach now welcomed Associate Dean Buchanan from the School of Dentistry to discuss the possibility of seeking an exemption from the University's standard grading system.

Dean Buchanan distributed copies of a handout that explained the problems they face in Dentistry with the D grade. She noted that for Dentistry students, virtually all of the courses are required and students go through them in lock-step process. Before January, 2009, some course directors assigned D grades and considered them passing; others assigned D grades, did not consider them passing, and required remediation. To eliminate the confusion, the college educational policy committee voted to eliminate the D grade from Dentistry courses.

Their accreditation depends on a competency-based educational program, Dean Buchanan explained, and the definition of the D grade in the University's grading policy ("worthy of credit but not wholly meeting course expectations") is unacceptable for demonstrating competency. Many dental schools do not use the D grade (Dean Buchanan provided a partial list of institutions that do

not). No one, she observed, is likely to want a dentist who obtained a D in some portion of his or her training.

When they first adopted the policy, they did not consider it an alternate grading system requiring approval by this Committee (which the policy calls for). On an appeal, however, it was claimed that this is an alternate grading system that had not been approved. The School of Dentistry thus asks the Committee to determine if it is an alternate grading system, and if so, to approve it.

The D thus equals an F, not a new C-, Professor Siliciano asked? It is not a new C-, Dr. Buchanan confirmed; a student must achieve competency.

Remediation/retaking is determined in individual cases by the scholastic standing committee, Dr. Buchanan said in response to a query from Ms. Phillips. They look at the whole record; if the student has received an F in one course, they will allow remediation; if the record as a whole is poor, they might call for a student to repeat the entire year. The committee is very diligent, she said, and looks at every transcript, because it has a duty to protect the public and to not the student keep trying (and run up debt).

Professor Chervany asked if remediation shows up on the transcript. The F becomes a C, Dean Buchanan said, and the faculty are rigorous about bringing a student to competency. So in remediation, the F is a placeholder, Professor Chervany observed. That is correct, Dean Buchanan said.

The Committee discussed briefly what alternate grading systems are. One could interpret the dental school practice as within the existing grading policy, Professor Wambach said, because the policy does not require faculty to use every grade (nor to use pluses and minuses). In order to avoid challenges to the policy, however, it might be best if the Committee approves it as an exemption. Dr. McMaster said that the policy also calls for the Committee to review data from the exempted units.

They are also working with the Center for Teaching and Learning, Dean Buchanan related, in looking at all grades in order to reach a school consensus on grades in different types of courses. They are offering seminars to the faculty. The faculty response has been very positive, she said in response to a question from Professor Wambach. Trying to calibrate grades across the school is an intriguing and rather ambitious effort.

Professor Chervany said that unless there would be trouble caused by the precedent, the Committee should approve the request from the School of Dentistry because it is what the professionals in the field believe appropriate and because it will put them in a stronger position. The Committee voted unanimously to support the request.

Professor Wambach thanked Dean Buchanan for joining the meeting and adjourned it at 3:25.

-- Gary Engstrand