

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy**  
**Wednesday, March 5, 2008**  
**1:30 – 3:30**  
**238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Cathrine Wambach (chair), LeAnn Alstadt, William Bart, John Kieffer, April Knutson, James Leger, Richard McCormick, Robert McMaster, Claudia Neuhauser, Peh Ng, Jane Phillips, Emily Ronning, Paul Siliciano, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Molly Tolzmann, Joel Weinsheimer

Absent: (George Green for) Gail Dubrow, Douglas Wangenstein, David Zeller

Guests: Tina Falkner (Office of the Registrar)

[In these minutes: (1) students' right to know who graded their work; (2) extra credit; (3) mid-term alerts; (4) tuition-band cap enforcement; (5) policy review: policies related to degrees]

**1. Students' Right to Know Who Graded Their Work**

Professor Wambach convened the meeting at 1:35 and began by noting that the Senate office had received an inquiry from the Student Conflict Resolution Center about whether there is any policy on students' right to know who is grading their work (when different from the instructor of record for the course). She said she did not know the circumstances of the case that caused the question to be posed; perhaps a student asked and was refused the answer.

Ms. Phillips said she was surprised that students did not already have that right. Professor Neuhauser, however, pointed out that in Math, for example, the professor assigns the grade but there are a number of graders for exams and papers. If there is a question, the professor would talk with the grader, but the student need not know who the grader was. The faculty member should take the responsibility for grading, Professor Leger agreed, and if there is a question, it is the faculty member who should take the question and who is responsible for dealing with it.

Dr. Knutson said she has been involved in classes with discussion sections where the TAs grade the exams but the professor made it clear that it was his or her responsibility. When she was a graduate student, she met with the professor to review grades. Graduate students may be responsible for the grades in individual sections but they meet to be sure they are being consistent and the professor reviews their work. Does that mean the professor should be sure there is consistency across graders, Professor Wambach asked? "Yes," Dr. Knutson said, and the professor should announce to the students how grading will be done.

Professor Siliciano said he would like to see formalized the professor's responsibility. He also said that grading should be done by someone formally associated with the course such as TAs or paid

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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.

graders (rather than, for example, members of a lab team). So there needs to be a policy prohibiting instructors from outsourcing grading, Professor Wambach commented.

If there is a concern, Ms. Ronning said, it is not about who graded the student's work but about the professor reassessing the grade. She agreed the professor should be responsible, and before a dispute goes to the student ombuds service, the faculty member have reviewed the grade.

Ms. Phillips reported that in biology courses, there are extensive lab reports that the TAs meet and discuss, but there is still subjectivity in grading and the professor may not know all the nuances. If the student is not to have access to the grader, there should be a policy requiring that an ungraded version of the student's work be provided to other TAs or graders; if the results are the same, there would be no issue.

Professor Neuhauser said that different courses are run different ways and no one policy would work. What is important is that the student know who to go to if he or she has a question—it could be a TA, it could be the professor.

Professor Weinsheimer said that in the last 20 years, TAs have taught courses and discussion sections that have become increasingly independent. During the recent strike, a number of his TAs moved sections from campus and he did not know about it. He was told it was acceptable for them to do so because if he did not allow it, that would undermine their authority. In his view, the TAs have no authority unless he delegates it to them. There needs to be a clear statement on who is responsible for a course and that statement should be on the syllabus. He said he finds it odd that a grader would need to be protected or need anonymity. One question may be "who is the instructor of record?" Has the professor ever seen the exam? Are the results of exams always normed? Is partial credit given? It makes sense that the student would have access to the grader, who should have the first opportunity to explain the grade, but the grader does not make the final decision. That review, however, would allow the grader to determine if he or she made a mistake or if the complaint is unwarranted.

TAs come and go quickly, Professor McCormick observed, and student may raise a question about a grade after the TA is gone, so it should be the primary responsibility of the professor, who also may not have access to the grader.

Professor Wambach asked the student members of the Committee if they believed it important students be told who grades their work or if it is sufficient to know that the professor reviewed the grades. Mr. Kieffer said he's never had a problem getting an answer to a question but ultimately there should be accountability; he said the professor should be responsible. Ms. Alstadt said she also had never known it to be an issue. Ms. Tolzmann said that as long as there is someone to whom a student can go with a question, that is all that is needed. She related that she was a TA last semester and a student had a question on a paper; it was helpful to have the professor review the grading and say it was fair, rather than letting her deal with the issue herself.

From a policy standpoint, Professor Leger said, it might be helpful to have the TA as the starting point, but for the whole University, the faculty member must be responsible. Professor Neuhauser agreed there should be a policy that the instructor of record is responsible for the grade. But the instructor of record in courses where the section of registration is the lab are the TAs of the lab sections, Ms. Phillips added. Thus, it should be made clear that the PeopleSoft "Instructor of Record"

and the professor really in charge of the course are not the same thing. But there are questions about the instructor of record, Professor Weinsheimer observed.

Ms. Ronning said there is a difference if the student's work is subjective versus checking boxes. Ultimately any question should go to the instructor of record and he or she can decide what to do. If the student does not agree with the professor's decision, he or she can then grieve, but Ms. Ronning said she would rather see the issue go from the TA to the faculty member than from the TA to the student ombuds office.

Ms. Phillips said she is aware of two or three cases where students asked that their work not be graded by a particular TA because they believed the TA had it in for them (and the students were right). So there have to allowances made. Everyone tries to guard against students having the view that their grade would have been better if they'd had a different TA, Professor Weinsheimer said. There are a lot of ways of guarding against that problem; he tells TAs the approximate scale he wants to see at the end; he doesn't like to do that but it helps to control grading.

There appear to be several elements to a policy, Professor Wambach summarized: the faculty member is responsible for the grading, the faculty member is responsible for ensuring uniform grading across sections and graders, and grading must be performed by someone formally associated with the course. Students should also be informed who will do the grading, Dr. Knutson said, and that information should be in the syllabus. But it could be that the faculty member does not know who will be doing the grading, Professor Wambach objected; there could be a grading pool. Then students should be informed HOW the grading will be done, Dr. Knutson responded.

Can the names of graders be kept secret if they are associated with the course, Professor Weinsheimer asked? They cannot, Dr. Falkner said, under the Minnesota Data Practices Act, if they are employed by the University. Professor Siliciano said that his department uses undergraduate TAs but does not release the names to students because they believe those TAs could be susceptible to more pressure than others might be. If a student challenges a grade, he or she should be able to find out who did the grading, Professor Neuhauser suggested, but should not be provided a list of potential graders. If there is a grading pool, the question is not even relevant, Professor McCormick said; if a student has a problem, he or she should go to the instructor of record, who will determine if the grade was fair and accurate. Mr. Kieffer said he did not believe students care who graded their work, only that they know who to go to with a question.

One problem could be ensuring uniformity, Ms. Alstadt said. Students may complain that TAs are not grading the same. That happens; it's a big university, but if a requirement for uniformity were in a policy, it could lead a lot of students to complain. They already do, Ms. Phillips commented (with no malice).

Ms. Phillips went on to contend that who is responsible for a course needs to be in writing and it needs to be clear. In part that is also for the benefit of TAs, who sometimes become possessive about labs or sections.

Professor Weinsheimer asked about the pool concept in grading. Professor Neuhauser explained that in Math, for example, with so many final exams, it may be that one person grades one question on an exam and others grade different questions. So there could be a number of individuals

grading one exam. A student might be able to find out who graded "section 5." She pointed out that a Math faculty member (and faculty members in other fields as well) cannot know, 15 weeks in advance, who will be doing the grading, so requiring that the graders be identified on the syllabus is not practical.

What is important is that there be someone accountable for the grade to whom the student can talk, Dr. Knutson said, and understand how the grade was arrived at. The student can file a grievance if he or she disagrees. It is not important who graded the work; being the instructor of record is what is important.

[After the meeting, Professor Wambach asked that Ms. Phillips and Dr. Knutson draft a policy on accountability for grading.]

## **2. Extra Credit**

Professor Wambach next noted that another question had been raised with the Senate office about a (non-existent) Senate policy: on extra credit in a course. She said she was not aware of any official policy on extra credit, although it certainly has been the general practice not to offer extra credit except to an entire class (rather than to one or a few individuals). She pointed out that this is also an NCAA regulation for student-athletes, who may not receive extra credit in a course unless the same opportunity for extra credit is available to all students in the class.

Professor Siliciano said the question comes up when students do poorly in a course and then ask if there is a way to do extra credit. Most instructors say "no" because it would be unfair to the other students in the class, but some may not be able to bring themselves to refuse. Professor Ng pointed out that syllabus policy requires that syllabi include information about how grades will be computed; if there is extra credit available, that option must be on the syllabus, so it is not clear what an additional policy would look like. Besides, she commented, if a student cannot do the minimum level of work required for a good grade, how will they do the extra work to improve it?

Professor Neuhauser said the Committee needs to guard against micromanaging courses. It has not proposed a policy on late homework—there needs to be some flexibility. Being fair and ethical is important; minute policies are not desirable. It was pointed out, however, that there are instances where extra credit is being made available to some but not all students in a course.

If the subject needs to be mentioned in a policy, Professor McCormick said, the way it was presented in a brief handout to the Committee was acceptable: "if extra credit is to be available, it must be equally available to all," with nothing more specified. Adopting it and making people aware of it would send a message about giving extra credit on an ad hoc basis and it would make students realize that any extra credit is to be available to all.

Professor Weinsheimer said he was trying to imagine a situation when ad hoc extra credit would be given. If it does, it would not be from a teacher who wants to be unfair or to give someone preferential treatment. He has provided extra opportunities to non-native English speakers that were not available to other students, he said, and agreed with Professor Neuhauser that any policy must be flexible without allowing individuals to be unethical in the classroom.

There is an additional rule, Professor Wambach repeated: It is an NCAA violation to give student-athletes extra credit that is not available to other students. Faculty generally do not know NCAA rules and could advertently violate them, causing the University problems. She agreed with Professor Weinsheimer: it is very likely those instructors who do give selective extra credit are not consciously being unethical, just naïve (perhaps they are new to their job). She said she would favor a policy statement, one that people would need to know about. She also agreed that the Committee should not try to micromanage courses.

Professor McCormick reiterated his support for a general statement. The Committee agreed to take up a policy statement at a future meeting.

### **3. Mid-Term Alerts**

Professor Wambach said that the impact of mid-term alerts would not be taken up at the meeting, although the item was on the agenda. Dr. Falkner, however, had a more specific question that had arisen: the Student Conflict Resolution Center contacted her about a student who failed a course and was surprised that he had not received a mid-term alert. She said she explained what the University does, which is to remind instructors to send mid-term alerts. The University does its "due diligence" as an institution: it reminds instructors to send the alerts. The question is what happens if they do not do so.

It may have been that the individual was doing well and then plummeted at the end of the semester, Professor Bart speculated. The complaint is that the instructor did not send an alert, Professor McCormick said, but it may also be that there were no materials to be graded in the first few weeks and then a lot later.

Ms. Phillips said it was her understanding the mid-term alert was a service to students, not an instance of the University taking responsibility for the student's education. Is it an "official" communication in which the University takes responsibility for student performance? It is not, several Committee members commented. Ms. Phillips went on to say that it is the student's responsibility to keep track of his or her grade; it is the faculty member's responsibility to be sure the student CAN keep track of the grade.

The Committee showed no inclination to act in response to the complaint.

### **4. Tuition-Band Cap Enforcement**

Professor Wambach reported that she had received a message from the Registrar, Ms. VanVoorhis, about the number of students taking more than 20 credits. The Committee had been concerned if students enroll for more credits than they intend to take as a way of course-shopping. A few students take more than 20 credits and those who do generally do well in their classes. What was not known was whether there is a larger number of students who enroll for 20 credits or more before the cancel-add time expires.

Ms. VanVoorhis reports that the numbers, for Twin Cities campus undergraduates, are these: 178 registered before the cancel-add period began, 179 during the first week of the cancel-add period, 184 the second week, and the number enrolled for 20+ credits leveled out at 197. The number went

UP, not down, which confirms the Committee's impression that there does not need to be any enforcement mechanism to ensure students are not enrolling for 20+ credits to course-shop. This one, she concluded, can be put to rest.

#### **5. Policy Review: First Round: Policies Related to Degrees**

Professor Wambach recalled for the Committee that beginning last semester, she and Professor Leger, Ms. Alstadt, and Dr. Falkner, along with Professor Carol Chomsky from the Faculty Consultative Committee, have been serving as a joint subcommittee to reorganize and revise Senate educational policies, because some are out of date and they are not well-organized or well-labeled. Because people often have difficulty finding a policy they need, the subcommittee is seeking to make them more visible and well-organized; they will also be reformatted to the University's new policy template.

She explained that the subcommittee started with 30 documents, reviewed them each paragraph by paragraph, and sorted the provisions (which were mixed together in a variety of ways) into eight categories. The subcommittee tried to consolidate and re-arrange sentences paragraphs without changing the language of the policies, but that became difficult as they encountered policy wording that needed to be revised or deleted or policies that simply needed to be improved—and it was impossible when, as turned out to be the case, completely new policies were required. She brings today the first category of policies (which deal with degrees) that the subcommittee has revised and asks that Committee members comment on the drafts. [The draft policies are appended to these minutes; the minutes will refer to the drafts.]

Professor Wambach first highlighted the new or substantially-revised provisions:

-- (New, in "Credit Requirements for an Undergraduate (Baccalaureate) Degree") Degrees are awarded by the University, not by a college or department or campus. Degree requirements and standards are set by the University, but the determination of some requirements and standards are delegated to departments, colleges, and campuses. (Although that is what everyone knows, the acknowledgement does not appear in Senate policy.)

-- (Substantially revised, in "Expiration of Old Credits") In order to ensure that graduating students will be up-to-date in the discipline, an academic unit may decide not to accept course work towards satisfying requirements for the major if the course was taken too long ago. Any such time limit shall be clearly and regularly communicated to prospective and current students.

-- (Substantially revised, in "Revisions of Courses Required for a Major") Academic units have the authority to eliminate or substantially revise courses required for the major and to eliminate or revise prerequisites for the major. Such new requirements will not normally be imposed on currently-enrolled full-time students. 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 doing so.

-- (New, in "Academic Unit Authority Over the Curriculum") Academic units have the authority to establish their curriculum and major requirements and to add to or remove courses from both. (This policy was necessary in order to provide the foundation for the policies on expiration of credits and revisions of courses required for a major.)

Committee members offered a number of suggestions on the policies.

Dr. Knutson moved that the "Comment" originally included with the policy "Promoting Timely Graduation" (but proposed for deletion in the revision) be retained.

A university in a large metropolitan area must meet the needs of a variety of students, some of whom do not wish to attend college full time, and some of whom may come to the University precisely because it offers flexibility in its educational programs. The University recognizes that some students may wish to attend on a part-time basis, and that others, for financial or other personal reasons, are unable to complete degrees in four to five years.

For many students, however, significant educational benefits may be derived from devoting the majority of their time and attention to studies while in college. Students should also recognize the opportunity costs of delayed graduation (paying additional tuition and fees, and the income and career advancement foregone when studies are extended).

Other Committee members opposed the motion, not disagreeing with the intent of the language but accepting the view that the revised policies as they will appear in the policy library should be "clean" and without additional non-policy language. The explanations will remain in the policy archives. The motion was defeated.

Professor Wambach said she would bring the revisions to the subcommittee and then return to the Committee with new versions.

Professor Wambach adjourned the meeting at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota

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[This is the version as revised following Committee discussion and further exchanges among members of the subcommittee. This is not necessarily the final version that will appear on the Faculty Senate docket.]

### **Credit Requirements for an Undergraduate (Baccalaureate) Degree**

1. Degrees are awarded by the University, not by colleges or departments or campuses. Degree requirements and standards are set by the University, but the determination of some requirements and standards are delegated to departments, colleges, and campuses.
2. Baccalaureate degrees consist of a minimum of 120 semester credits.
3. Requirements regarding breadth of study (commonly known as liberal education requirements) and other campus-wide graduation standards must be approved by each campus governing body.

4. College/campus approval is required for any baccalaureate degree programs that require more than 120 credits. Proposed baccalaureate degree requirements in excess of 132 credits must also be approved by the appropriate chancellor or provost in consultation with the Senate Committee on Educational Policy.
5. S/N Grading Base: the maximum number of S/N credits allowed to a student is 25% of degree-qualifying University of Minnesota credits. No unit shall allow S/N grading in program and major course work unless the S/N grading system is preset by the unit for specific courses. For a student who completes only the minimum number of 30 credits at the University, no more than 8 may be taken S/N. For other students it is 25% of the number of credits they take at the University (any campus). No student may receive an undergraduate degree unless at least 75 percent of the degree-qualifying University of Minnesota credits carry grades of A, B, C, or D (with or without a plus or minus attached to it).
6. D Grades Not Permitted in Major Courses: Required courses for the major in which a student receives a D grade (with or without plus or minus) do not count toward the major. All other courses (including courses in the major field that are not required to complete the major) will count toward a degree if the student earns a D or better.
7. GPA Requirement for Graduation: The cumulative GPA required for graduation shall be 2.00, and shall include all, and only, University course work. (That is, a student who is admitted to a degree program or major and who completes all campus, college, and program requirements with a minimum GPA of 2.00 in University course work in the major and a cumulative GPA of 2.00 in University course work shall be allowed to graduate). No academic unit may impose additional gradepoint standards or conditions to graduate.
8. Limitation on Skills Credits: No more than 6 semester credits from physical education, study skills, or applied music (in any combination) will count toward a student's degree, unless the credits are a required part of the student's program requirements. This provision does NOT mean a student may count 6 credits of physical education, 6 in study skills, and 6 in applied music; it establishes a TOTAL of 6 credits from all four areas combined as the number that will count toward a degree.

#### **Campus-Specific Credits Requirements for Undergraduate Degrees**

All credit awarded by the University, regardless of the campus or type of instruction, shall count toward the credit requirements for the degree (subject to the limitation on skills credits), but this policy establishes additional requirements for campus-specific coursework from the campus from which the student seeks to graduate.

A student's college or campus may, under extraordinary circumstances, waive the requirements in sections 2, 3, and 4, below, but not section 1.

1. To be eligible for a University of Minnesota undergraduate degree, a student must present at least 30 semester credits awarded by the University of Minnesota campus from which he or she is seeking to graduate.

2. Students must complete at least half of upper division major work on the campus from which they are seeking to graduate.
3. At least 15 credits of the last 30 credits earned prior to the awarding of a University degree must be awarded by the University of Minnesota campus from which a student is seeking to graduate.
4. For students who seek an academic minor, to be eligible for record of a minor on the University of Minnesota transcript, students must take at least three upper division credits in the minor field at the campus from which they will receive their degree.

### **Promoting Timely Graduation**

The University expects most undergraduate students to graduate in a timely manner, defined here as four years. All departments and programs must have in place a curricular plan that allows students to graduate in four years. Such a plan should assume that students will enroll for at least 15 credits per semester, on average, but the plan may not require that students enroll for more than 17 credits per semester, on average. Course offerings must be scheduled on a two-year horizon so that students can progress in a way that leads to timely completion.

All admissions and registration materials must contain language emphasizing to students that they must complete at least 15 credits per semester on average to graduate within four years, and all advisors must inform students of the need to complete 15 credits per semester on average in order to graduate in four years.

The administration shall adopt policies, and further publicize existing policies, which will facilitate timely graduation for most students (within four years). The Office of the Provost shall engage in regular conversations with the Senate Committee on Educational Policy about these policies and their effectiveness.

[Note for the policy office: the following three policies should be linked/be together.]

### **Academic Unit Authority Over the Curriculum**

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

[This policy should be moved to the Curriculum section of educational policies?]

### **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 shall be clearly and regularly communicated to prospective and current students.

### **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. Such new requirements will not normally be imposed on currently-enrolled full-time students but 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.

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

(See also the policy Academic Unit Authority Over the Curriculum)

### **Degrees With Distinction and Degrees With Honors**

#### 1. General Provisions

- a) Any campus may offer both degrees with honors and degrees with distinction, only one, or neither.
- b) A student may obtain both a degree with honors and a degree with distinction, if offered by the campus attended.
- c). For the purpose of awarding degrees with honors and degrees with distinction, the overall performance of degree candidates on each campus shall be judged in relationship to the performance of degree-seeking students on that campus, not in relationship to other University students.
- d) To qualify for either a degree with distinction or a degree with honors, a student must have completed 60 or more semester credits at the University. For the purposes of meeting the grade point average standards set forth in this policy, only University course work shall be counted.
- e) It is the expectation of the Senate that in general, a campus will not award degrees with honors and with distinction, in total, to more than approximately 10 - 15% of any graduating class.
- f) The University transcript will contain a brief explanation of the difference between a degree with distinction and a degree with honors.
- g) The Office of the Registrar shall annually report to the Senate Committee on Educational Policy data on the number and percentage of students on each campus who receive degrees with distinction and degrees with honors.

#### 2. Degrees with Distinction

- a) The initiative in establishing degrees with distinction shall lie with the campuses concerned and must be approved by the chief academic officer on the campus.

b) To graduate "with distinction," a student must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.750 or higher at the time the student graduates. To graduate "with high distinction," a student must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.900 or higher.

c) The grade point average alone shall be used in determining the granting of degrees "with distinction" or "with high distinction." Campuses may choose to offer only degrees "with distinction" or only degrees "with high distinction," but in either case they would be subject to section 2(b) of this policy.

### 3. Degrees with Honors and Campus Honors Programs

a) The requirements for a degree with honors shall not consist of only the accomplishment of a designated amount of course work or achievement of a stipulated grade point average, but shall also include a definite standard of excellence in scholarship with specific evidence of ability to accomplish independent or original work. To obtain a degree with honors, the student must participate in a fully-developed campus honors program.

b) The initiative for establishing degrees with honors (that is, cum laude, magna cum laude, and summa cum laude) shall lie with the each campus and must be approved by the senior academic officer on the campus. Qualifications for degrees with honors must meet the requirements of sections 3(b-d) of this policy.

c) A campus desiring to grant degrees with honors must propose an honors program, specifying how honors students are to be selected, the nature, depth, and breadth of the honors requirements, and the general requirements for obtaining a degree cum laude, magna cum laude, and summa cum laude.

d) The minimum grade point average in upper division (i.e. after the completion of 60 semester credits) required for achievement of a degree "cum laude" shall be 3.500, that for a degree "magna cum laude" shall be 3.666, and that for a degree "summa cum laude" shall be 3.750. Campuses have the authority to adopt higher grade-point averages.

e) Campuses shall attempt to ensure that there is reasonable consistency across units in the amount of work required of its students to obtain degrees with honors.