

Senate Scholastic Standards Committee 2016/2017

Meeting Minutes 10/5/2016

9.00 – 10.30 AM

Senate Conference Room, Hall Dorm

Members present: Karen Bresciano, David Clokey, Susanna Cowan, Joe Crivello, Lauren DiGrazia, Holly Fitch, Hedley Freake (chair), Lawrence Gramling, Katrina Higgins, Jennifer Lease Butts, Susan Spiggle, Gina Stuart.

1. The minutes from 9/21/16 were approved as fabulous.
2. Two motions from the SSC on Minors and on Scholastic Standing/Grades were approved by the Senate with almost no discussion. This included the SSC sponsored amendment to the motion on minors giving departments or programs the authority to determine allowable overlap with major programs. The one question asked, relative to minors, was about when these changes will go into effect and the answer given was with the next catalog. The changes to the by-laws can be made immediately. The departments and programs offering the minors need to be informed of these changes, in particular that they are now responsible for determining the extent to which substitutions will be permitted. Katrina Higgins and Lauren DiGrazia will develop a process for communicating this to allow the regulations for each minor to be reviewed and to facilitate a smooth transition.
3. The committee received a new charge from the SEC to consider the possibility of including 2 October non-class days in the fall semester to lessen stress on students (see attached). The committee discussed how it might address this question and determined to start with the extensive calendar investigation performed by a committee led by Cameron Faustman and Jeff von Munkwitz-Smith. It also decided to ask the Student Welfare Committee to collect data on student stress from Student Health Services and Counseling and Mental Health Services. The SEC wishes to receive a recommendation by December 12.
4. Katrina Higgins presented suggestions for modifications of the language in the policy for Academic Adjustments for second language and writing requirements. This policy was presented to the Senate in 2006, though it remains to be determined whether a vote was taken. Under the old policy, the Academic Adjustments committee made recommendations to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Instruction, now the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, who made the decision. The new policy allows the committee to make the decision and then allows students to appeal the decision to the Vice Provost. That appeal is to be restricted to issues of process, without the possibility of additional evidence. The suggested new language is appended to these minutes. During discussion it became clear that new evidence can be brought to the committee, which would then reevaluate its earlier decision. Katrina agreed to add language to cover that possibility and bring it back to the committee.

5. The committee considered the concern brought forward by Jill Livingston that despite a clear decision by the Senate to leave assessments within courses to the instructors of those courses, there was ambiguity within the by-laws as to whether final examinations were required. Susanna Cowans attributed this to writing by committee, where changes in one part of the document resulted in unintended consequences elsewhere. While the committee was in general agreement with the changes suggested by Jill, it determined to hold any revisions until it considered the issue of bunched finals, also covered by this section of the by-laws. A request from the administration to the SEC to reconsider this issue is imminent and will likely end up with this committee
6. The committee discussed at length an earlier request from the SEC concerning the development of an expedited appeal of dismissal process for certain categories of students. Motivation for this comes in part from Athletics. Student athletes subject to dismissal are not permitted to participate in athletic activities, pending consideration of their appeal. This appears to be a university but not an NCAA regulation. Faster consideration of a successful appeal would allow them to rejoin their teams. However, the committee was clear that athletes should not be treated differently from other students. One possibility would be to allow expedited appeals for any student participating in university-sanctioned activities. International students might also benefit from an accelerated process. However, individual students who do not fall into either of these categories might also have reasonable and pressing needs for faster appeals. Given its complex nature, requiring the involvement of multiple individuals and careful consideration of each case, the appeals process cannot be accelerated in general, particularly after the fall semester. Singling out specific categories of students for faster consideration of appeals would be difficult. The by-laws give administrative authority to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs in the area of dismissal and therefore presumably appeals. One possibility is to make no recommendation and leave it to the Vice Provost to expedite appeals as she sees fit. An alternate suggestion was to invite compliance staff to meet with the committee in order to better understand this situation. This discussion will be continued in the next meeting.
7. The meeting adjourned at 10.30 AM.



September 28, 2016

TO: The Senate Scholastic Standards Committee

FROM: The Senate Executive Committee

RE: The Fall Academic Calendar

The Senate Executive Committee asks the Senate Scholastic Standards Committee to examine the feasibility of two non-class days in mid-October as a fall recess while keeping the entire Thanksgiving Recess. This charge arises from faculty and staff concerns that students do not get a break until Thanksgiving Week and thus may be unduly mentally and physically fatigued; in addition, they are subject to the necessary stress of various kinds of mid-semester assessments, but without a compensatory respite. We suggest that your committee get information from Student Health Services about the peak times for student stress and illnesses in the fall semester (which we have received anecdotally), and that you consider possible remedies such as, but not limited to: starting the semester earlier or ending it later; whether two fewer total class days are acceptable; and whether the current number of final examination days is still necessary since faculty are no longer required to give final examinations. We expect that your committee will consult the Senate Student Welfare Committee and the Senate Faculty Standards Committee as you consider this request. We ask that you report your recommendations to the SEC no later than December 1, 2016.

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POLICY ON STUDENTS SEEKING AN ADJUSTMENT TO THE UNIVERSITY GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS OF QUANTITATIVE REASONING OR SECOND LANGUAGE

The University Senate enacted General education requirements to ensure that all University of Connecticut undergraduate students become articulate and acquire intellectual breadth and versatility, critical judgment, moral sensitivity, awareness of their era and society, consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience, and a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge. A critical element of General Education is demonstrated competency in five fundamental areas – computer technology, information literacy, **quantitative skills**, **second language proficiency**, and writing. The development of these competencies involves two thresholds: establishing entry-level expectations and meeting graduation expectations.

In cases involving a significant disability, the graduation expectations for the quantitative skills and/or second language competency may be a barrier to degree completion. The University has established a policy for considering academic adjustments to the University General Education Requirements and individual school/college requirements in an effort to respond to the extraordinary circumstances of students while maintaining academic integrity. In all cases, justification of an academic adjustment requires evidence of the disability's impact upon the student's ability to learn the course material.

Academic adjustments are only considered after a student has demonstrated that he or she is unable to complete the competency. In these cases, this situation will involve a student with a significant disability whose documentation and educational history provide compelling evidence that an academic adjustment is warranted. Each academic adjustment will be based on an individualized, case-by-case assessment and should not compromise the academic integrity of the requirements for a specific major or degree. Academic adjustments may include an exception to an academic rule, such as allowing a student to complete a required course(s) on a pass/fail basis or substituting an alternative course(s) for a required course(s).

The following rules will apply:

- If quantitative or second language competency is deemed an essential element of a program or course of student, then a substitution is not permitted. The question of "essential element" will be decided by the Dean or designee of each school or college.
- Academic adjustments will not reduce the number of courses/credits required to complete General Education requirements. **Waivers of General Education requirements are never granted.**
- If the student changes his or her school or college of enrollment, academic adjustments will be reviewed by the appropriate Dean's office in the new school or college of enrollment.
- Academic adjustments will be subject to the 8-year rule.
- For students who plan to continue their studies beyond the baccalaureate degree: Please note that, while approved adjustments will be adequate for graduation, they may not meet the requirements for admission to a graduate/professional school (e.g., law, medicine, etc.).

The Academic Adjustments Committee, will convene to review requests and make final decisions. The committee will include the following individuals:

- Designee from the Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education and Instruction (Committee Chair)
- Designee from the Center for Students with Disabilities
- Designee from the Department of Mathematics (in the case of a quantitative request)
- Designee from the Department of Literature, Cultures and Languages (in the case of a second language request)
- Designee from the General Education Oversight Committee
- Designee from the Dean's Office of the petitioning student's school or college, or the Director of the Bachelor of General Studies Program and Academic Center for Exploratory Students (ACES), as appropriate

Students may appeal the decision of the Committee to the Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs within 30 days of the date of the decision. This appeal is a review of the record furnished by the Committee for the purpose of determining whether all applicable procedures have been followed. It does not include an opportunity to submit additional evidence or documentation.