

Minutes
Senate Scholastic Standards Committee (SSSC)
March 11, 2014
Hall Dorm, Room 123, 12:00-1:30 PM

SSSC Members (attending in BOLD): **Felicia Pratto (Chair)**, Robin Chazdon, **David Clokey**, **Joseph Crivello**, **Susanna Cowan**, Dipak Dey, **Lauren DiGrazia**, **Johann Peter Gogarten**, Lawrence Gramling, **Katrina Higgins**, **Elena Innes** (Undergraduate student representative), Jennifer Lease Butts (ex-officio), **Jill Livingston**, John Meyers (Undergraduate student representative), **Thomas Recchio**, Christopher Tomaszewski (Graduate student representative).

Guests: Brenden Crook (undergraduate student) and Jaclyn Chancey (in lieu of Jennifer Lease Butts, Honors).

Recorder: Jill Livingston

1. Minutes were approved as posted.
2. Update/Discussion/Vote on letter to Provost Choi and Dean Holsinger regarding graduate student financial stress and its impact on scholastic mission.

Discussion: Felicia noted that at the March 3 Senate meeting, Provost Choi acknowledged awareness of the negative impact of recent administrative changes on graduate students. He indicated that future changes in policy will be coordinated with Kent Holsinger to prevent unintended negative consequences. The draft document sent by Larry Gramling on March 10, 2014, which included changes previously suggested by Peter Gogarten, was vetted. Changes suggested by the former pertained to tone and the latter to grammar. Committee members felt that it was important to send a strong message and deliver the letter without delay. Consideration was given to whether Kent would be invited to a future meeting. Also, because of the sensitivity of job positions of some members and because not all members were present at the meeting, it was felt that the letter should come from the committee, rather than individual signatories; however, committee member names will be listed in the closing.

Decisions: The suggested changes were approved without abstention or dissent. Felicia will finalize changes and send the letter "on behalf of the Scholastic Standards Committee," listing committee member names. Elena will discuss this issue with USG, which may pen a letter of its own.

3. Katrina Higgins: Issue about issue of no-W (withdrawal) drops from courses.

Discussion: Currently the decision to allow students to withdraw from courses without a W designation on their transcript is made by deans of schools and colleges. This practice results in lack of uniformity across the University. Students in CLAS, for example, are rarely allowed to drop without receiving a W on their transcript, while this practice is more common in other schools and colleges. This issue is further complicated when students transfer from one school or college to another, as they may experience different standards in each and schools/colleges

can retroactively remove W designations on transcripts previously assigned by another. No-W drops are part of a larger problem regarding inconsistent practice in decisions concerning catalog exceptions. These may also include decisions about: late pass/fail, course substitutions, and late drops. Inconsistent practice across schools and colleges creates a system that is unfair to students and has broader implications for full-time status. A dean who approves a no-W drop may not understand potential implications on full-time status, an important factor for financial aid, housing, etc. An idea for a Bylaws change was presented that would give the Provost authority over catalog exceptions—the suggestion being that the Provost would charge a central committee comprised of dean’s designees and other representatives who would provide input (e.g. registrar, financial aid, and housing). This committee would make decisions regarding catalog exceptions. This committee would not have authority for graduate student decisions. Dean’s designees would attend those meetings where student cases in their school/college were up for consideration. The issue of workload/time demand of this committee was briefly discussed. The committee also touched upon whether there ought to be uniformity across schools and colleges (or only within them) and whether deans would support a loss of autonomy in decision-making. Another idea was presented to revise the description of the withdrawals that now appears on the back of transcripts.

Decisions: Katrina will talk to more individuals for feedback, including: Deans, advising center directors, and faculty. She will then report back to Scholastic Standards.

4. Update from Lauren DiGrazia and Katrina Higgins regarding meeting the Karen Bresciano about bunched finals policy.

Discussion: Lauren and Katrina met with Karen to discuss this issue. As Scholastic Standards has discussed in the past, the current bunched finals policy presented in the Bylaws cannot be enforced by OSSA. In practice, OSSA uses a student’s final exam schedule to determine whether they are eligible to reschedule an exam. OSSA does not have the manpower to check transcripts to determine when a final assessment was assigned—a key determinant of bunched finals eligibility noted in the Bylaws. Because all courses are currently scheduled a room in which to hold a final examination, all courses (other than online courses) are considered for the bunched finals policy. The committee discussed a number of potential solutions including: Can the Registrar allow faculty to opt out of room scheduling? Can a room booking be used by OSSA to determine eligibility towards bunched finals and if so, would this require a Bylaws change? Karen suggested several ideas to work towards a solution: forming a subcommittee to continue to discuss solutions; implement a change to the Bylaws whereby only exams held on the same day (not 3 consecutive blocks) be eligible for the bunched finals provision; and provide language on how rescheduling ought to be handled—current language states “at a time that is agreeable” to both faculty and student but it would be preferable to state “at a time that is reasonable.” As the committee was at the end of time allotted for the meeting, this discussion needed to be curtailed.

Decisions: Lauren will pursue allowing faculty to opt out of room scheduling. We will then assess whether there will be a reduction in number of students availing themselves of the bunched finals provision.

5. David Clokey: Michael Gilbert, VP for Student Affairs, has made the determination that the Office of Student Services and Advocacy should be renamed the Dean of Students Office.— change needed in By-Laws accordingly.

Decisions: The change was approved without abstention or dissent.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM. Those agenda items listed below will be placed on a future agenda.

6. Lauren DiGrazia: Issue—sometimes a discrepancy between a student's date of withdrawing from coursework and when a student vacates residence halls/terminates services.
7. Katrina Higgins: What should we call "unclassified" (non-degree) students in the By-Laws?
Terminology and practice are outdated.
8. New business

Next Meeting: Tuesday March 25, 12:00-1:30 p.m. 123 Hall Dorm

3/12/2014 JL