

Senate Conference Room, Ground Floor, Hall Building 123; 3:30-5:00 PM, Tuesday, October 17, 2017

SCHOLASTIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES

Attendees: Veronica Makowsky (Chair), Greg Bouquot, Karen Bresciano, Stuart Brown (via phone), Jennifer Lease Butts, Robin Coulter, Holly Fitch, Hedley Freake, Larry Gramling, Robin Grenier, Gretchen Geer, Katrina Higgins, Jill Livingston (recorder)

Absent: Brian Aneskievich (teaching), David Clokey, Joseph Crivello, Ellen Tripp, Susanna Cowan, Jean Main, David Wagner

I. Minutes from September 19, 2017 were approved as revised

II. Information Items

We have a new graduate student representative, Gretchen Geer, a Master's student in Medieval Studies.

Veronica met with Jeff Shoulson (Interim Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Initiatives) and Brandon Murray (Academic Affairs and Policy Specialist). Both are strongly in favor of the proposed changes for additional degree credit requirements. Brandon sent brief report on requirements at other New England flagships. Provost Teitelbaum will be consulted. Veronica will seek advice on pursuing the changes at the next meeting of the SEC and standing chairs. Of particular consideration, what will be the difference between double major and additional degrees if we reduce the 30-credit requirement? It may make the double major obsolete.

SSC members wishing to post to the HuskyCT site should send documents to Veronica, who will post them.

The agenda for the Oct 31st meeting will include: additional degrees, academic adjustments policy, and academic accommodations.

III. Nicole Gelston, General Counsel's Office

What follows is a summary of various points made in the discussion between Ms. Gelston and members of the SSC.

Academic accommodations and disability law at UConn

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of ADA require that we provide necessary and reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities to insure equal access. Accommodations must be provided as long as the accommodations do not fundamentally alter the integrity of any course or program of study.

The federal government interprets "reasonable" very broadly. When considering whether an accommodation is an undue burden administratively and financially, the government will look at

the total budget of the University. If a student has documentation that supports their disability and request for accommodation, we are required to comply.

Student accommodations responsibilities reside with the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) office. CSD has the authority to determine what is reasonable. Currently 3,600 students receive academic accommodations. CSD works with students, grants accommodation, and then issues letter to faculty. Because of sheer volume, it is not possible to talk with all faculty prior to issuance of letters. Emails go out via the *Daily Digest* explaining this process prior to the semester.

The new process requires that TAs are notified. Faculty are required to input TA's into the system CSD uses to provide accommodations. CSD will be doing training; TAs will be invited.

Faculty must implement reasonable accommodations. If a faculty member believes an accommodation fundamentally alters the essential mechanisms of their program, they should contact CSD. Students often have "preferred accommodations"; a reasonable accommodation may not be what they prefer. When looking at whether accommodations are reasonable, a consideration is whether the requested accommodations have been given for other reasons, e.g., has a faculty permitted a student to miss class due to illness?

There is no outside body who arbitrates between CSD and faculty, nor a formal appeals process. The University has designated CSD with decision-making authority. The University has to designate someone with expertise; typically, this is a disability service provider. If faculty refuse to implement accommodations, CSD will involve Office of Institutional Equity (OIE). The General Counsel's Office, Labor Relations, the Provost's Office, and/or OIE might become involved and possibly mediate.

Faculty should not provide accommodations to students for disability reasons without going to CSD. If they have concerns about a request from CSD, they need to provide the accommodations until they have worked things out with CSD.

Concerns and Solutions

A key area of discussion between Ms. Gelston and SSC members was the scale of accommodations and resultant workload increases for faculty. A large course may require a number of individual accommodations of varying kinds, for which faculty sometimes need much more advance notice.

Regarding the number of students with accommodations, CSD has created a number of programs for students with disabilities. For example, students can pay an amount over tuition to be part of program for students with Asperger's. CSD has received more resources over years because of the increased number of students with disabilities.

Getting more support to help faculty with increasing workloads would be an issue for the Provost's Office. General Counsel would deal more with the need for training on requirements. From an employment standpoint, the Provost and AAUP would be places for conversation. CETL Educational Technologies and UITS may be able to help with solutions, for example, could they help faculty to record a course?

There is a question about whether letters from CSD notify faculty that they should talk to CSD if they have concerns. APIRs should be informed of the process since they teach a lot of students.

Certain accommodations do not add work for faculty (e.g. note takers), but others do. Perhaps the types of accommodations could be classified according to how much work they add to faculty. CSD could then provide different levels of communication to faculty, depending on the type. For example, if the accommodation is note-taking, an email notification will suffice. But, if the accommodation requires more time from the faculty, perhaps CSD could engage the faculty in discussion.

There were uncertainty and concerns about whether CSD can make academic exceptions, including late drops and late or retroactive withdrawals (after grades have been submitted). There is no legal requirement to make retroactive accommodations, but this practice may be occurring. Are retroactive changes happening because UConn did not know or do enough earlier? Late diagnosis? These types of grade changes are also done for students without disabilities, but this is an academic issue and is done through established process with faculty consultation. It is a longstanding tradition at universities that grades are a faculty responsibility. If students are removed without a W, it creates potential problems for financial aid. Because Senate By-Laws state that changes to grades after posting are in the purview of faculty, if the law provides CSD the authority to change grades, the By-Laws need updating.

To improve communication with faculty, could there be a type of committee similar to academic adjustments? Could there be a place for faculty to go with concerns? Department heads need guidance. If faculty members do not comply with requests, CSD may consult department heads, and sometimes OIE.

Privacy interests play into discussions between CSD and faculty. Privacy relates to FERPA (educational need to know). Because CSD makes the decisions, that office is the one with the need to know. HIPAA does not come into play because we are not dealing with medical records. It protects faculty to not have information about the disabilities; students cannot question whether faculty behavior towards them is discriminatory.

Other questions or points to consider:

- What is to be done if a student tells a faculty member that they do not need an accommodation?
- Sometimes it is difficult to maintain confidentiality, depending on the accommodation, for example, a student or students obviously getting more time than other students to complete in-class work.
- Conversation needs to also consider the student perspective. Students should get more communication from the University and faculty.
- Data is needed to determine the overall extent of the strain on faculty; how significant is this problem?

Decision: Donna Korbelt will be invited to a SSC meeting after October 31st. It would be helpful to give her a list of questions prior to meeting with SSC, so she can provide the data we need. SSC will work on formulating questions at its next meeting.

NEXT MEETING:
October 31, 2017
3:30-5pm, Hall 123