

Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee
Minutes—April 11, 2019

Present (voting): Wendy Cook, Janet Finke, Jackie Krause, Dan Lipori, Megan Matheson, Andy Piacsek, Josh Welsh

Present (non-voting): Eric Foch, Gail Mackin, Bill Schafer, Julia Stringfellow

Absent (voting): Ke Zhong

Absent (non-voting): none

Guests: Carolyn Thurston

Meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. Minutes of March 28, 2019 were approved as written with one abstention.

Chair updates

AAC had no items on the agenda for the April Faculty Senate meeting. Nothing has been added to the list of committee charges.

Old Business

a. Foreign Language Requirements

Scott Carlton contacted Janet about the foreign language requirement change that AAC approved earlier this year. The policy change was benefitting students retroactively, but due to recent changes in the registrar's office, that is no longer the case. Presently, students have to petition to waive the foreign language requirement. AAC will need to communicate the intention of the policy change to the registrar's office in order to make it official.

Concerns center on the change already being applied retroactively for some students. If this has been done for some students, then it should be done for all affected students. Also, clear parameters should be defined somewhere in policy for when or if a similar situation arises again. Most policies don't go into effect retroactively, but take effect beginning in the following academic year. This particular policy is beneficial for students if it takes effect retroactively. A very small number (approx. 20) of students are affected. These students come from specific majors, so advisors could be helpful in identifying them. Advisors would need to communicate with departments, and with the registrar's office, to ensure that no one slips through the cracks.

AAC's intention for the policy was to try to cover all students who would potentially be affected, including retroactively. This should be easy enough to do because such a small number of students is involved. Also, this is a short-term situation that will be resolved when no additional students are admitted under the old General Education program in the catalog.

Andy moved, and Megan seconded, to make the policy retroactive. Motion approved.

b. Appeals Policy/Procedure

Carolyn Thurston from Student Success attended the meeting to address concerns and possible issues that might arise while revising the appeals policy and procedure. Carolyn discussed the existing

process for appeals. There are an average of three hearings per year. Most are issues with grades or inconsistencies with a syllabus. Because the appeals process is so drawn-out, students are encouraged to try to resolve the issue with the instructor. This turns the issue into a communication experience for the student. Students who decide to follow through with a hearing typically are those who have a case where some type of arbitrary or capricious action has clearly occurred. Complaints about, or conflicts with, faculty are usually referred to the department chair or dean. Prior to a hearing Carolyn meets with the student to discuss definitions, so having a clear definition of arbitrary and capricious would be a good idea.

One issue is that the existing policy does not make clear that a student can grieve something other than a final grade. Another issue is that certain academic programs, such as para-medicine, aviation, education, some College of Business programs, and graduate programs are not under Student Success's purview. These programs have very clear standards they have to maintain, and there are contracts students are required to sign. Sometimes there is no clear appeal process for these situations and/or programs, although Carolyn does try to refer students somewhere that would be applicable. An outside representative body is recommended in these situations. Current policy states that an advisor will be assigned throughout the process, but Student Success doesn't assign advisors to students and does not have advisors identified. Incorporating faculty involvement, such as someone from AAC or another Faculty Senate committee, is a potential way to change this. However, the process will need to be clear. Student Success currently provides training for the hearing board in the fall and could also provide training for a faculty advocate.

The current policy is difficult because language is unclear and terms used are used inconsistently (e.g., "academic appeals," "academic grievances"). Carolyn recommended using "academic grievance appeals" instead. Another suggestion is to define what an academic grievance is, and then outline the grade appeal process and definitions in a subcategory.

There are questions about appeals for issues related to behavior. These are mostly separate from grade appeals, but at times there may be some overlap. Student conduct issues fall under Student Rights and Responsibilities, which is Joey Bryant's area of Student Success. Student conduct issues are different from grievances. Students can be removed from a class, but only from one single class. "Behavior" includes cheating, plagiarism, and classroom conduct, and is distinct from grade appeals, but a student could have a grievance about a conduct decision or about a grade. In the appeals procedure, CWUR G(4)a-c should be removed because it is covered under the Student Conduct Code in the WAC. Bill clarified with the assistant AG that a student can be removed from a class for the rest of the term if they are causing a disruption to the learning environment and/or affecting others in the class.

Existing policy and procedure will be reviewed for language and content, and a draft framework will be created. Janet will send the draft to Carolyn for her input. Discussion will continue at the next meeting.

New Business

a. Midterm Grades/Progress Reports

Gail and others have been working on developing a system for tracking students' progress. The system is based on the semester system, and the goal is to help students understand earlier in the quarter how they are doing in the class. A first-year piloted progress report is being run this year. The

reported gathers a snapshot of data from students' courses, but faculty participation rates are lower than what the group would like to see. Gail would like to have other ways to capture information, which would include having advisors involved so that they can use the information as part of their regular processes. A draft policy for mid-term grades has been put together. There is also a pilot of a way to get the information to advisors. Any existing mechanisms in place should be able to be scaled up when/if needed. Using Canvas would be preferred, but that may not be possible.

EC may need to consider bringing this issue up for discussion at Faculty Senate to get a sense of the senate before the policy is ready. This would allow time for initial feedback while AAC is still working on reviewing the policy.

Discussion will continue at the next meeting.

b. Non-Attendance policy

To be discussed at next meeting.

c. Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism

To be discussed at next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Next Meeting:

April 25, 2019

Barge 304