

**Curriculum and Policies Subcommittee Meeting Minutes**  
**October 25, 2022**

**Voting Members Present:** Michelle Berry, Joan Curry, Leslie Dennis, Jeff Millburg, Karin Nolan, Amber Rice, Claudia Stanescu, Jennifer Schnellmann, Joost Van Haren

**Non-voting Members Present:** Cassidy Bartlett, Molly Bolger, Abbie Sorg, Alex Underwood, Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski

**Voting Members Absent:** Caleb Simmons

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Chair Joost Van Haren called the meeting to order at 3:36 p.m. A quorum was established with 8 voting members; one additional member arrived after the approval of the minutes.

**I. Approval of Curriculum & Policies Subcommittee meeting minutes, 9/27/2022**

Joan Curry moved to accept the meeting minutes from 9/27/2022 as submitted. Jennifer Schnellmann seconded the motion. The motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 3 abstentions.

**II. Continued Discussion items**

**A. Undergraduate Leaves of Absence Policy proposal**

Based on the feedback provided at the September subcommittee meeting, a reformatted version of the policy text was provided and reviewed. Changes to the reformatted policy include the removal of the administrative note and stipulation regarding when in the semester orders must be submitted. Additionally, eligible students are defined at the beginning of the policy and the language is simplified throughout.

Discussion continued:

- One committee member questioned the policy's extension to relationships outside of spouses, such as domestic partnerships. It was clarified that state law mandates that these protections be extended to spouses at minimum, but the university may expand upon that coverage if desired. With this information, committee members felt that the best way to support students is with inclusive language.
  - Concerns were raised over how the institution could verify these alternate relationships and whether non-eligible students would claim false relationships to be granted a leave of absence.
    - One committee member stated that giving students the benefit of the doubt is important for the sake of being inclusive.
    - Another member expressed that it was unlikely for students to go through the effort of faking a relationship merely to be granted academic leave.
    - A third member mentioned that copies of military orders are not likely to be shared amongst friends or outside of families.

- Though there are many possible situations that the university would potentially want to support, the committee recognized that too broad of language wouldn't successfully reach students.
- The committee requested the following amendments in the proposal language: replace instances of "spouse" with the following: "spouse, domestic partner, or dependent".
- The committee requested that the rewritten proposal be reviewed by Veteran Services.

**The subcommittee agreed to rewrite the proposal with eligibility that includes students who are domestic partners and dependents of active-duty military members. After confirmation from Veteran Services, updated proposal documents for both the Undergraduate Leaves of Absence and the Military Excused Absence were sent to the subcommittee via e-vote.**

**The updated Undergraduate Leaves of Absence proposal passed via evote with 7 votes in favor and 3 abstentions.**

**The updated Military Excused Absence proposal passed via evote with 7 votes in favor and 3 abstentions.**

### III. New Discussion Items

#### A. Grade Appeal Policy proposal

**Presenter:** Abbie Sorg

The Office of General Counsel has recommendations for cleaning up language to make the grade appeal policy more clearly defined:

- replace instances of "should" with will/must to make policy more enforceable
- clarify the dean *or* dean's designee as the final step in the process
- clarify that the Office of the Registrar controls the routing for grade appeals
- including a deadline/timeline for every step and responsible party
- remove the list of valid reasons for a grade appeal as they are too broad and don't give students an accurate depiction of what is acceptable

Additionally, an individual college has expressed interest in expediting their appeals process. The committee should explore whether the university-wide procedure should be sped up or loosened to allow for colleges to implement their own timelines.

The Office of the Registrar feels the policy language can be condensed and simplified.

Discussion began:

- One committee member asked to review how the current standard of no appeals during summer disproportionately affects students making appeals for grades awarded spring term; these students must wait an extra 3 months (or get an extra 3 months to prepare).

- In order not to negatively impact students, the committee felt that if an option were to be given to speed up the appeals process, then students should not have their personal timeline to appeal reduced.
  - Committee members agreed it best to set the procedural expectation within institutional policy rather than letting individual colleges modify their procedure. Setting a process protects the timeline that students and faculty have for making and responding to appeals.
  - Colleges may only operate within the confines of procedure. If the department wishes to complete its responsibilities prior to the deadline, this does not conflict with policy. But, as a committee member pointed out, including a stipulation like this in the policy could cause students to expect an early response.
- One committee member voiced that if the valid and invalid reasons for appeal remain, these stipulations should be relocated to the top of the policy so it is made clear from the beginning what are acceptable reasons to appeal.
  - Another member rebutted that moving the stipulations above step 1 of the policy would alter the meaning; it would imply that students are confined to speaking with their instructors only regarding reasons listed as valid. They suggested removing the list of valid reasons and only shifting the invalid reasons near the top.
  - Another member countered that some students, especially first year students, might not have the confidence to know what they can speak with their instructor about, and these valid/invalid reasons may be helpful.
  - A third member asked whether the council should articulate examples of what qualifies for an appeal to assist the student and faculty, and if the Office of General Counsel would agree to that.
  - Building off the notion of removing any content from the policy that should not be enforced institution-wide, one member suggested providing separate, public documentation on typical reasons for grade appeals as well as training-based support for faculty/department heads going through the process for the first time.
    - Another member noted that it would be wise to have training that cautions professors against common mistakes (violating their syllabus) that would give students the right to appeal a grade.
- The committee requested the following as the proposal is drafted:
  - Proceed with the changes suggested by the Office of General Counsel.
  - Draft valid reasons for appeal as a separate document
  - Draft a training guide for faculty and department heads going through their first appeals process.

**The Office of the Registrar will proceed with the changes suggested by the Office of General Counsel and seek approval to create unofficial faculty and student guides to accompany the policy. A proposal document will be included on the November 29, 2022 meeting agenda.**

Joost adjourned the meeting at 4:57 p.m. The next subcommittee meeting will be held on November 29, 2022.

*Respectfully submitted by Cassidy Bartlett, 11/02/2022*