

Curriculum and Policies Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2024

Voting Members Present: Karin Nolan, Ally Roof, Dereka Rushbrook, Christopher Sanderson, Caleb Simmons, Amanda Sokan, Travis Spence, Joost Van Haren, Jeremy Vetter

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

Voting Members Absent: Doan Goolsby, Amber Rice

Chair Joost Van Haren called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. A quorum was established with 8 voting members. One additional member joined after the meeting was called to order.

I. Approval of Curriculum & Policies Subcommittee meeting minutes, 12/12/2023

Christopher Sanderson motioned to accept the meeting minutes from 12/12/2023. Karin Nolan seconded the motion. The motion passed with 8 votes in favor.

II. Discussion Items

A. Academic Distinction, Dean's List, Honors and Awards

Presenter: Abbie Sorg

The subcommittee was reminded of previously discussed changes and briefed on some new implementations to the proposal:

- Add "Undergraduate" to the policy title. This policy has always applied only to undergraduate students, and adjusting the title will clarify this.
- Update "University Academic Honors" to "University Academic Recognition", based on subcommittee feedback that "honors" was overused in the policy.
- Specify that the dean's list is term-based to highlight its difference from academic distinction.
- Add a table to the dean's list with full and part-time student credit thresholds.
- Though the committee had been interested in modeling a part-time dean's list after Pennsylvania State University's (PSU), the institution has since changed their policy. Instead of awarding dean's list recognition each time a student accumulated 12 units at a 3.5 GPA, it is awarded each term with full and part time credit thresholds. The proposal being reviewed currently follows this model.
- Remove honorable mention; as the full-time dean's list had been reduced to 12 credits, honorable mention is no longer warranted.
- Add the clarification of "academic year" to Academic Distinction as well as a table to illustrate the requirements. By having a credit requirement for the year rather than the term, students will have more flexibility to split up their workload as needed.

Discussion began:

- When a member asked whether transcripts would clarify full versus part-time dean's list, it was explained that this is the intention behind the current proposal, though if the subcommittee felt strongly against this, it could be discussed.
- Another member questioned why PSU had changed its policy.
 - It was relayed that PSU had difficulty tracking credits across multiple terms, and students had a hard time understanding the policy. Its updated policy is straightforward and allows students a chance to earn recognition for each term.
 - Another member asked whether the PSU transcript distinguished full and part time dean's list.
- One member pointed out that it would be possible for a student to qualify for two dean's list in an academic year (24+ credits), but not qualify for academic distinction (30+ credits).
 - It was clarified that 30 units was originally chosen as incentive to keep students on track to graduate in 4 years. While the credit requirement could be replaced with the requirement that students achieve the dean's list for 2+ terms in an academic year, such a change would remove this incentive.
- A subcommittee member suggested that since the dean's list and academic distinction are based on 12+ units of letter grades, this would de-incentivize students to take Experiential Learning Opportunities (which have alternative grading only). These are courses that the university encourages students to take.
 - Another member asked if this meant that S/P/F grades should count towards the credit requirement for dean's list and distinction (while not counting toward the GPA requirement).
 - A member pointed out that by lowering the threshold to 12 units, this helps offset S/P/F course(s) students are taking.
 - One member mentioned that the senior year track in one of their department's programs requires entirely P/F courses, which would prevent these students from earning dean's list recognition for their final term and academic distinction for their final year.
 - Another member suggested making S grades count towards the dean's list/academic distinction, but not P or F grades.
 - A subcommittee member pointed out that S may not be a grading basis for all courses (such as when students elect Optional P/F).
 - Several members agreed that even with S available as a grading basis, many colleges do not use it in practice. It would require considerable effort and communication to get departments to assign S grades consistently. Two members offered to speak with the College of Education assistant dean and teaching program coordinators to learn whether such implementation would be possible.

- A member addressed the unit requirement for academic distinction, saying that if the goal of updating this policy was to be inclusive to part-time students, the requirement should be closer to 18 units.
 - Another member asked if this would result in having a full and part time category for academic distinction as well as dean's list.
 - One member suggested leaving it at academic distinction and dean's list on the transcript without specifying full or part time, but adding a note to the transcript key that the institution recognizes full and part time. Other institutions would be able to tell from how many credits the student took which distinction they earned.
 - Another member questioned how many students knew whether they were full or part-time, and requested the table headings be clearer. As they currently appear, a student enrolled in 12 credits who received a 4.0 in two classes might think they qualify for the part-time dean's list. It should be clear that students can't pick and choose which of their courses count towards the dean's list.
 - Two members were interested in removing the full and part-time columns to instead clarify full and part-time distinction as bullet points below. A third member felt these numbers should remain prominent in the table as they are.
 - One member noted that the recent updates to the Enrollment policy include a full and part-time status table.
- A subcommittee member asked if students fluctuate between full and part-time enrollment in the same academic year, which would make distinguishing between part-time and full-time distinction difficult.
 - Another member suggested a way around this could be to change the requirement for academic distinction, so only students who have earned the dean's list for 2+ terms in an academic year would be eligible for academic distinction. However, this would depend on the goals for the policy: to incentivize timely graduation in 4 years with credit requirements, or to celebrate achievements regardless of how long students take to graduate?
 - One member with an advising perspective advocated for maintaining a credit requirement for students to follow.
- A member relayed a complaint they'd received from a student who had earned a 4.00 GPA for 12 credits while working a full-time job and was not eligible for the dean's list. A student government body had also reached out on this student's behalf to see what could be done. Based on this, the member felt the proposal's goal should be to recognize students to improve morale and retention.
- Another member noted that if eligibility for academic distinction was based on receiving the dean's list for 2 terms in an academic year, then students would no longer be able to average their GPAs to make the list (if they earned a 4.00 in the first term and less than 3.5 in the second term).

- Addressing the incentive to graduate in 4 years, one member stated that the graduation rates for Arizona Online are typically 8 years.
- A member questioned the purpose of academic distinction compared with the dean's list. Should this achievement be set aside for students who have stood out within academia?
 - Another member countered that part-time and online students are trying to be distinguished in academia while also overcoming other challenges. These people should not be penalized for having additional obstacles that prevent experiencing full-time student life. It is easier for a student to be distinguished academically when their sole responsibility is to be a student. There are many deserving part-time students who were not given the opportunity to attend full-time.
 - A member agreed that the GPA should be the challenge students are trying to overcome, not the credit load. Distinction could still appear differently on the transcript for full and part time.
 - Another member echoed that academic performance is what is being recognized, not the context in which it occurs.
 - A different member felt that it was inequitable to give the same recognition to students doing different amounts of work. They preferred PSU's previous policy model, where students could bank their units over time and earn distinction for the same number of credits as a full-time student. They added it was unfair that a part-time student could receive recognition for doing well in 2 courses, while a full-time student who did well in 2 courses and poorly in 2 others would not receive recognition.
- One member suggested removing academic distinction as a recognition altogether. Having different levels of similar awards gets confusing for students.
 - Several members agreed; one added that while all institutions in the benchmarking have a dean's list, only 7 have academic distinction.
 - One member felt that with academic distinction removed, S/P/F grades should not count towards the dean's list.
 - Another member asked whether the policy should distinguish between courses that are offered exclusively P/F and courses that are P/F optional. They noted that if P grades counted towards the dean's list, a student could change their grading basis from regular to P/F optional for better odds at receiving dean's list recognition.
 - A subcommittee member suggested keeping the policy language neat and based only on regular grades rather than trying to assign a "fake GPA" for S/P/F courses.
 - Another member pointed out that S/P/F courses are house-numbered, so it would be easy to differentiate them in policy.
- The majority of the committee agreed to remove academic distinction. When some members expressed concern for student reception, it was agreed that

student feedback would be heard prior to proposing the removal of academic distinction.

- One member agreed to check in with the full council chair and the subcommittee student representative for their concerns on removing academic distinction.
- A member suggested the rationale for its removal was that with students alternating between full and part-time, starting mid-year, and non-traditional tracks, it no longer made sense to track annual distinction.
- It was clarified that no changes were being proposed to graduation with academic distinction other than the name, which has changed to “Bachelor’s Degree Latin Honors”.
- The final change to the proposal was parsing the information in the final paragraph, “Other Awards and Honors” into two sections on “Commencement Awards and Recognition” and “Honor Societies”.

The subcommittee agreed for the Office of the Registrar to make the proposed changes to the drafts, including the tentative removal of academic distinction and clarification of the dean’s list table. Agreed-upon committee members will gather feedback from students, the full council chair, the assistant dean of the college of education, and Teaching program coordinators on the removal of academic distinction. Discussion will resume at a future subcommittee meeting.

B. Undergraduate Certificate

Presenters: Abbie Sorg

The subcommittee’s attention was directed to the stipulation in the current policy that no more than 50% of units in a certificate may be used to satisfy another degree requirement. This note has an asterisk detailing that students enrolled in previously-approved certificates are not impacted by this rule. While this was meant for students who had already completed coursework towards a certificate where they were double-dipping more than 50% of their courses at the time this policy was last revised, it has since been misinterpreted by some departments to apply to all current/future students in programs that were created before the 50% stipulation was established.

There are only 9 active students that began a certificate prior to 2019, when this stipulation was created. Removing the note from the current policy will not affect these students’ ability to exceed 50% (if they are following the policies from their original catalog), but will prevent confusion for future students and programs.

This policy proposal will accompany the Multiple Use of Courses proposal.

Dereka Rushbrook moved to approve the updated policy, and Christopher Sanderson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with 8 votes in favor.

C. Change of Major or College

Presenters: Abbie Sorg

The subcommittee was updated on the confusion surrounding the new budget model and primary programs. The institution will charge students a single program fee for the most expensive program the student is enrolled in, so it won't matter which program was declared first.

Other previously discussed changes include removing the note that students need dean's approval to change majors, and relocating most of the information on multiple majors to the Bachelor's Degree Candidacy policy (which addresses multiple degrees, so the students can compare the two).

The day prior to the subcommittee meeting, a workshop was held to gather feedback from the advising community on how to improve the change of major policy and process from a student and advising perspective. Advisors were interested in creating a single website for students to obtain information on changing majors between all programs. This process does not need to be fully known in order to update the policy.

Discussion began:

- One member who attended the workshop expressed that differences in procedure vary not only between colleges, but between departments and programs. Reviewing this information is an opportunity to clean up the process for all.
- The same member agreed that the policy should continue to move forward while the advising community worked on unifying their processes.
- Another member was excited about the prospect for the honors college advisors, who currently advise students across all majors and must keep up with various processes, requirements, and timelines.

The Office of the Registrar will draft an updated proposal for discussion at the February subcommittee meeting.

The meeting was officially adjourned at 4:59 PM. The next subcommittee meeting will be held on February 27, 2024.

Respectfully submitted by Cassidy Bartlett, 02/09/24