Curriculum and Policies Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2021

Voting Members Present: Michelle Berry, Leslie Dennis, Moe Momayez, Angela Kaczowka (proxy for Amber Rice), Caleb Simmons, Chair Claudia Stanescu, Jordan-Isaiah Toyos, Joost Van Haren

Non-voting Members Present: Molly Bolger, Carmin Chan, Abbie Sorg, Alex Underwood

Voting Members Absent: Joan Curry, Jim Hunt, Jennifer Schnellmann

Chair Claudia Stanescu called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. A quorum was established with 7 voting members.

I. Approval of Curriculum & Policies Subcommittee meeting minutes, 8/24/2021
   Joost Van Haren moved to accept the meeting minutes from 8/24/2021 as submitted. Jordan-Isaiah Toyos seconded the motion. The motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

II. Policy Proposals
   A. Class Attendance, Participation, and Administrative Drop amendment
      Presenter: Abbie Sorg

      Over the course of the pandemic, some emergency updates were made to the procedures surrounding student absences from classes. These updates are in alignment with good public health approaches, allowing students more flexibility to stay home when unwell or in other exceptional circumstances. The Provost has requested that the official policy be amended to incorporate these updated procedures permanently. The Office of the Registrar would like to take this opportunity to streamline some of the existing policy text to make it more readable and consistent for students in all classes regardless of modality.

      Discussion commenced:
      • Committee members discussed the total length of absence required for students to reach out to the Dean of Students office. For classes in 7.5 Week sessions, an absence of 3 days would be equivalent to a full week in the regular session; some members felt this was a very short time, while others noted that 3 days in those sessions can cover a lot of course content. Suggestions included extending the required period from 1 week to 2 (or equivalent, for shorter classes), or writing the policy as a percentage of the total class time rather than a specific number of weeks.
      • Concerns were raised about the Administrative Drop policy (this section of the policy was revised in the proposal for formatting purposes, without changing substance of the existing policy). Committee members expressed concern about whether faculty should have the ability to drop students based on excessive absences, especially if an absence on the first day of class can be considered excessive. This element of the policy has been in place for a number of years, and is not a new addition as part of this amendment. Would it be preferable to spell out in more detail what “excessive absences” means, and/or to add a requirement that faculty communicate with students to a certain extent before administratively dropping them? This is a tricky area to navigate—some students expect to be dropped for nonattendance and are upset to find later in the semester that they haven’t been dropped, while other students wish to remain enrolled even after several absences and are upset when they are dropped. Whichever setup is selected, the important thing is to remain consistent and communicative. Requiring a specific amount of communication with each student could be difficult for instructors of large classes with long waitlists.
• Concerns were raised about the process and timeline for students reaching out to the Dean of Students office. Working through the DOS provides some insurance to students so they don’t need to disclose personal information to multiple instructors, but it could also be a lot of bureaucracy for students to deal with in exceptional circumstances. Would it be better to extend the period of time from 1 week to 2? No, as more than one week would still be a lot of content for students to miss. The policy doesn’t state that students must reach out to the DOS during the 1-week absence; an update to the policy language may be helpful to clarify that students should contact DOS as soon as possible but that there isn’t a time limit on when they can reach out.

• Committee members indicated support for the updates in general. The inclusion of the Dean of Students will help provide consistency for students and faculty, and will reduce the number of people that need to be notified of sensitive personal information. Including standard language about this process on the syllabus template would be helpful.

• The committee made the following recommendations for the policy proposal:
  o In the Extended Absences section, clarify that students can contact the Dean of Students office before, during, or after a 1+ week absence. This will provide flexibility for students that have a planned absence as well as those with emergent absences.
  o Include standard language around the process for contacting the Dean of Students in the syllabus template.
  o In the Administrative Drop section, give direction that instructors should attempt to communicate with students prior to administratively dropping them.
  o Consider splitting the Administrative Drop section into its own separate policy rather than remaining part of the Class Attendance policy.
  o Consider including a notation on courses or classes that plan to utilize administrative drop for students that miss the first class session.
  o Invite a representative of the Dean of Students office to the next subcommittee meeting to talk about the DOS process with committee members.

The committee agreed to postpone voting on the proposed amendment while additional updates are drafted in response to the items discussed above. An updated version of the proposal will be considered at the next subcommittee meeting.

B. Posthumous Degree and Posthumous Certificate of Achievement proposal
Presenter: Alex Underwood

The University of Arizona does not currently have an official policy for what to do in cases where a student passes away after doing some coursework but before completing all degree requirements. This is a policy that a number of other institutions have, and it would be best for this process to be made official and transparent. Our current institutional procedure is interpreted and utilized differently by different colleges, and creating an official policy would help provide consistency for families in this situation.

Discussion commenced:
• Is there a benefit to receiving a posthumous degree or certificate? It’s mostly an honorific, and is meaningful for families and the institution recognize and honor the work the student did. There is no tangible benefit to the family or the university that this documentation provides.
• Why have a separate posthumous degree vs. certificate of achievement? Is there some reason why the institution couldn’t provide a posthumous degree for all deceased students regardless of how far along they are in their program? Since it is a degree and there are standards for earned hours, it is preferable to include a threshold for which students receive the posthumous degree.
• Is the 90-unit threshold appropriate? Some students transfer into the institution with a large number of transfer credits but may be far away from completing their degree program. Would it
be better to use a percentage of completion for undergraduate students similar to the threshold for graduate students? Since we only accept 64 transfer credits towards a degree, is this really an issue? Most students that transfer to the UA have come from Arizona community colleges and have had the UA as their end goal since the beginning of their college journey- these students deserve the same honor as students that started their career at the UA.

- Since a posthumous degree is an honorific only, has no tangible/financial benefits, and is presented to grieving families, it would be preferable to keep this policy as simple as possible, and as broad and generous as possible.
- What is the scale of this issue? Without official documentation, the trend for posthumous degrees is probably between 1-5 per year. This is not a large number of degrees to process each year.
- The committee recommended an amendment to include a fourth bullet point in the eligibility requirements in the policy: “have completed at least one semester at the University of Arizona”.

Caleb Simmons moved to approve the proposal pending the amendment noted above, and Michelle Berry seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with 8 votes in favor.

Claudia adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m. The next Subcommittee meeting will be held on November 23, 2021.

Respectfully submitted by Abbie Sorg, 11/4/21