

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Annual Report of the Educational Policy Committee to Faculty Council
April 21, 2017

Membership:

Kristin Reiter (Chair, Health Policy and Management, At-Large, 2019); Sherick Hughes (Education, At-Large, 2019); Gidi Shemer (Biology, At-Large, 2019); GerShun Avilez (English and Comparative Literature, At-Large, 2018); David Garcia (Music, At-Large, 2018); Jeannie Loeb (Psychology and Neuroscience, At-Large, 2018); Jennifer Coble (Biology, At-Large, 2017); Theresa Raphael-Grimm (Nursing & Medicine, At-Large, 2017); Geetha Vaidyanathan (Economics, At-Large, 2017); Matthew McKnight (Undergraduate Student); Robert Kurzydowski (Graduate Student, GPSF); Chris Derickson (University Registrar, ex-officio); Christy Samford (Deputy Director, University Registrar, ex-officio); Abigail Panter (College of Arts and Sciences, ex-officio)

Committee Charge:

The committee is concerned with those matters of educational policy and its implementation as to which the Faculty Council possess legislative powers by delegation from the General Faculty under Article II of the Code. The committee's function is advisory to the Faculty Council and the University Registrar.

Summary of Major Activities:

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the EPC considered the following topics and/or took the following actions:

Revision of the Policy Governing Multiple Areas of Study for Students Enrolling in a Ninth Semester or Beyond

On February 19, 2016, upon recommendation from the EPC, Faculty Council voted unanimously to pass Resolution 2016-6 *On Undergraduate Academic Eligibility*. One element of the resolution allowed transfer students (who transfer in the equivalent of two or more semesters worth of credit) to enroll in up to ten semesters without having to apply for permission. Students who enter as first years are still required to petition for, and receive permission, to enroll in a ninth or tenth semester. Under university policy that was in place at the time Resolution 2016-6 passed, students who enter as first years and are granted permission to enroll in a ninth or tenth semester "will graduate with one major only and no minors indicated on the transcript." In the August EPC meeting Katie Cartmell, Transfer Student Coordinator in the Office of Retention, explained that Resolution 2016-6 did not specify if transfer students, who were now granted a 9th and 10th semester without the need for an appeal, would have access to the second area of study. She noted that because there are no required advising appointments or appeals for transfer students, there is no mechanism to make them aware of rules around multiple areas of study until their graduation appointment. Lee May, Dean of Academic Advising, shared concerns about having two different rules about graduation with multiple areas of study for transfer versus non-transfer students if the policy was not applied to both. EPC discussed whether or not the penalty of losing ability to have an area of study listed on your transcript is appropriate for any student,

transfer or non-transfer, if the advising team has, by granting a student access to a 9th semester, determined that the student had circumstances that necessitated the additional semester. EPC asked the advising team to explain the appeals process. Dean May indicated that Advising gets around 200 appeals for a 9th semester each year. The students must complete a petition form online where they list what courses they need to take and the reasons for needing extra semester(s). She indicated that the advising team would never approve someone to have a 9th semester just to finish a minor and that this is one of the purposes of the appeal process to ensure that a 9th semester is truly needed to get a degree. In the October meeting, the EPC voted unanimously to remove the restrictions for all students on graduation with multiple areas of study for students enrolling in a ninth semester or beyond. In the December meeting, the EPC slightly revised and unanimously approved the proposed resolution language. These recommended revisions became *Resolution 2017-1. On Removing the Restrictions on Graduation with Multiple Areas of Study for Students Enrolling in a Ninth Semester or Beyond*, which was passed by Faculty Council in its January meeting.

Productivity Quotas

In the October EPC meeting, Misha Becker, Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics, made a presentation about the impact of General Administration productivity quotas on the linguistics program at UNC Chapel Hill, and asked for the EPC's support in suggesting revisions to these quotas. In December, Dr. Becker submitted a proposed resolution to the EPC and asked if the EPC would consider bringing the resolution to Faculty Council. The EPC discussed its potential role and agreed that the issue was not an educational policy that would fall within the scope of the EPC's charge. However, the EPC agreed the issue was important and encouraged Dr. Becker and her colleagues to work directly with Faculty Council to develop their ideas into a resolution that they would then take to Faculty Council.

Enhanced Priority Registration

In the December EPC meeting, Tiffany Bailey, Director of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) presented a proposal to establish enhanced priority registration for a small group of students whose needs were not being met by the existing priority registration process. Enhanced priority registration would allow these students, upon approval by ARS and the University Registrar, to register during the first priority registration window on the first day of registration. The proposal would not increase the total number of students receiving priority registration, as these students were already included as priority registrants. ARS indicated that this accommodation would be rare and extended to students under the Americans with Disabilities Act As Amended and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In the January meeting, the EPC voted unanimously to support the proposal to establish Enhanced Priority Registration. These recommendations became *Resolution 2017-2. On Enhanced Priority Registration*, which was passed by Faculty Council in its January meeting.

“Global Engagement Scholar” Transcript Remark Approval

In its advisory role to the Registrar, the EPC approved the “Global Engagement Scholar” transcript remark for graduates who successfully complete the requirements of the Global Engagement Scholars Program.

Student Government Proposal to Add Course Evaluation Data to ConnectCarolina

In the January EPC meeting, Matthew McKnight, Undergraduate Student Representative to the EPC, shared a survey of 150 students that revealed that students would like more information about courses for registration purposes. The student proposal described the desire to have “course evaluation” data; however, the EPC noted that the type of information students said they would like (in the survey) such as a course syllabus, the number of exams and papers and whether the course is flipped or blended is not currently captured by course evaluations. The EPC discussed whether it would be appropriate to add these questions to course evaluations, and agreed that it probably would not because this would increase the burden on students completing course evaluations, would require collection and storage of large amounts of additional data, and would reflect self-reported information from students when it would be the instructors who would be better equipped to provide an accurate description of the course requirements. The EPC discussed whether it would be feasible to make syllabi widely available to prospective students, but there were concerns raised about protecting the intellectual property of instructors, and about possible challenges related to posting current syllabi in time for registration given that instructors assigned to any section could change and syllabus assignments could be modified up until the first class day. Nick Siedentop, from the Office of Undergraduate Curricula explained that it might be possible for instructors to add more descriptive course information in the “Class Notes” section of ConnectCarolina. The EPC unanimously agreed that it is in favor of providing more information to students for the purposes of registration. However, the approval of this idea by the EPC would depend on the specific types of information to be provided. There was lively debate about the advantages and disadvantages of students having access to the professor effectiveness ratings from students who had taken the course in the past. At this time, the prevailing opinion was that it was not advisable to allow this and doing so would not meet the objectives stated by the students. The EPC encouraged Student Government to consider further the specific types of information students would want for registration purposes, and to develop a detailed proposal that the EPC and Faculty Council could review. The EPC also suggested that Student Government talk with ITS to see if this type of information could be provided via ConnectCarolina.

Report of the Contextual Grading Transcript Working Group

In May of 2016, with the support of the EPC, Chris Derickson, University Registrar, convened a working group to consider the implementation challenges that had emerged regarding the contextual grading transcript. The working group, consisting of Ron Strauss, Abigail Panter, Christy Samford, an ITS representative, two faculty, two undergraduate students and Stephanie Schmitt, met 5-6 times during fall semester (2016) to consider the following issues:

- Auditability & verifiability (esp. when information changes over time)
- Readability
- Technical challenges
- Relevance or usefulness of data
- When to roll out such data
- Communication plan for informing the campus about this change

In the January and February EPC meetings, Chris Derickson presented to the EPC the conclusions and recommendations of the working group as described in their report, as well as

his own conclusions and recommendations as the University Registrar charged with implementation. Mr. Derickson explained that the working group made five recommendations to improve the contextual grading transcript as follows:

1. Establish a grade census date to freeze the contextualized information;
2. Replace the numerical representation of the percentage ranges with a graphic representation of this information;
3. Rename the SPA to either Median Grade Average (MGA) or Average Median Grade (AMG);
4. Apply the contextualized grade information retroactively to Fall 2010; and
5. Implement with a one year testing period in which the contextualized transcript is available as an unofficial transcript for all undergraduate students.

Mr. Derickson raised the following concerns about the implementation of the contextual grading transcript, even if the improvements described above were made.

1. Costs: There would be significant time and monetary costs to the University to implement the contextual grading transcript as an unofficial transcript, and these costs would continue if the transcript were to be maintained.
2. Technological challenges: ITS cannot currently support graphical representations and contracting with a third party would compromise the records system of the University. In addition, UNC's current transcript vendor cannot support the production of two different formats for transcripts.
3. Inconsistent consumption of the contextual data: No matter how much we try to engineer the transcript, inconsistency in the use of the contextual data will be present. This problem is exacerbated by the growth in Credential Assembly Services (centralized hubs that collect transcript data and forward them to professional schools) and electronic exchange of transcripts because outside systems are not able to receive contextual data.

Mr. Derickson concluded that he could not support moving forward with the contextual grading transcript as the official transcript of the University. In the February EPC meeting, the EPC agreed unanimously that based on the findings and recommendations of the working group and the conclusions of the Registrar, proposed implementation of the contextual grading transcript is impracticable at this time. This conclusion was presented to Faculty Council at the March Faculty Council meeting. During the Faculty Council meeting, one attendee suggested that the EPC should put grade inflation and grading patterns at UNC back on its future agendas since the contextual grading transcript was developed to respond to grade inflation. Due to time constraints at the Faculty Council meeting, other concerns were not recognized and the discussion was ended.

Appointment of Christy Samford to represent the Registrar's Office on the EPC

At the February EPC meeting, Chris Derickson announced that he would be moving to Duke University to pursue another professional opportunity. The EPC thanked him for his years of service as an ex officio member of the EPC and voted unanimously to support Mr. Derickson's motion to appoint Christy Samford, Deputy Director, to represent the Registrar's Office until the next Registrar was named.

Elimination of the Print Version of the Undergraduate Catalog

In the March EPC meeting, Allison Legge, Interim Registrar, explained that the online undergraduate catalog had been launched in 2016, and requested EPC's approval to eliminate the print version to save costs. Ms. Legge explained that the online catalog had enhanced quality and navigability and had been approved by Accessibility Resources and Service as meeting all accessibility requirements. Ms. Legge indicated that students could still print the catalog. The EPC suggested that the University print one or two copies for archival purposes. The EPC unanimously approved the Interim Registrar's request to eliminate the print version of the undergraduate catalog.

Revision of the Final Exam Policy

The Office of Undergraduate Curricula asked the EPC to consider revisions to the final exam policy to provide clarifications and address questions that had arisen from faculty. A subcommittee consisting of David Garcia, Sherick Hughes, and Kristin Reiter developed proposed revisions based on questions that had been submitted to the EPC by the Office of Undergraduate Curricula. The EPC discussed the policy at length with the goals of preserving instructors' ability to determine the content of the final exam, while still meeting the University's requirements for contact hours (per UPM #29, the three hour final exam period adds an additional 180 minutes of instructional time to the semester and therefore must be used). The most significant revisions that the EPC made to the policy included defining traditional versus non-traditional final exams; clarifying that instructors must provide three hours for students to complete the final exam per UPM #29; and clarifying the process for requesting or receiving exam excuses. The EPC also made many clarifications. In the April meeting, the EPC voted unanimously to approve the proposed revisions to the final exam policy. These recommendations became *Resolution 2017-5. On Final Examinations*, which will be presented to Faculty Council at its April meeting. The EPC agreed that the final exam policy should be revisited once the EPC receives final proposed revisions to the Class Attendance Policy to ensure that the policies governing excused absences are in accord.

Revision of the Policy on Repeating Course Enrollments

In the April EPC meeting, Christy Samford, Deputy Director of the University Registrar's Office, presented concerns that the existing policy on repeating course enrollments did not reflect what was happening in practice. Specifically, the policy indicated that students must seek permission to repeat a course when in fact they do not do so. The EPC discussed the policy at length, and identified one additional issue. Specifically, the policy indicated that students could not repeat courses except in very specific circumstances (such as when a minimum grade is required in a pre-requisite course for a higher-level course or a major area of study); however, the EPC discussed the fact that this is not enforceable and students do repeat courses. The policy was revised to reflect only what is enforceable; specifically that students will receive credit toward fulfilling the university's minimum hours requirements only once for a course, regardless of how many times a course is attempted. In its April meeting, the EPC unanimously approved the proposed revisions. These recommendations became *Resolution 2017-6. On Repeating Course Enrollments*, which will be presented to Faculty Council at its April meeting.

Revising the Policy on Academic Eligibility

In the January EPC meeting, Chris Derickson presented a proposal to create a special student

status called “special non-degree seeking”. Mr. Derickson explained that the revisions to the eligibility policy are required in order to meet General Administration’s FUSS (Fostering Undergraduate Student Success) standards that direct that academic eligibility be aligned with eligibility for financial aid. Currently, a student deemed ineligible or suspended under the academic eligibility policy needs to leave the university. Furthermore, any coursework done outside the university does not transfer to UNC, and thus, should the student return, their UNC GPA would remain the same as when s/he was initially suspended. The proposed policy revision would allow suspended students to take courses through the Friday Center’s continuing education program and/or Summer School, such that their UNC GPAs could be improved, with the stipulation that these students seek a different status. The proposed status term was “special non-degree seeking.” In subsequent meetings, Abigail Panter reported that some offices on campus were concerned that requiring students to seek a non-degree seeking status would not support their academic success. Dr. Panter and the Registrar are working to develop a technological solution that would permit separate identification of suspended students in the University’s official records, but that would allow them to remain degree seeking. Final proposed revisions to the policy will be provided to the EPC for its consideration in academic year 2017-2018. These revisions will be considered by the EPC and draft recommendations brought to Faculty Council for its approval.

Report Respectfully Submitted by Kristin Reiter, April 21, 2017