

Report of the Educational Policy Committee to Faculty Council March 22, 2002

Membership: Melissa M. Bullard (2003), Edward Carlstein (2002), Randall Hendrick (2002), Lloyd S. Kramer (2004), Bobbi Owen (2003), Susan F. Pierce (2004), Heidi Schultz (2002), Joseph Templeton (2004), David Lanier (*ex officio*).

The Educational Policy Committee meets monthly during the academic year.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 19, 2002.

Report prepared by: Randall Hendrick (Chair) with review of committee.

Committee charge: "The committee is concerned with those matters of educational policy and its implementation which have significant impact upon graduate and undergraduate instruction within the Division of Academic Affairs, and as to which the Faculty Council possesses legislative powers by delegation from the General Faculty under Article II of the Faculty Code. The committee's function is advisory to the Faculty Council in respect of such matters."

Previous Faculty Council questions or charges:

At the October 5 Faculty Council meeting, Prof. Estroff asked the Educational Policy Committee to re-examine the University's policy and practice regarding the scheduling of examinations and graded assignments on major religious holidays for substantial minorities of the students. The current policy of the University reads as: "The University calendar does not recognize religious holidays. The faculty are encouraged to make reasonable accommodations for students requesting to miss class due to the observance of religious holidays." The committee considered whether it could draft a better policy that might avoid such conflicts in a principled way. It judged that the current policy could not be substantially improved upon, but that some problems could be avoided if the University community was provided with more information about both the policy itself and the timing of holidays. Specifically, the committee recommends that the entire University community be reminded of the policy by e-mail at the beginning of each semester, much as it is reminded of other policies such as the sexual harassment policy. In addition, University calendars should include a convenient referral that accurately catalogues religious holidays in order that the University policy can be implemented. With the help of the Registrar, David Lanier, the committee identified a website (<http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/2002.htm>) that can be used for this purpose.

At its September 7, 2002 meeting, Faculty Council passed resolution 2001-5 that charged the Educational Policy Committee with reporting annually on the state of grading practices at UNC-Chapel Hill. The committee continues to be concerned about the issue of grade compression, and notes the negative example that Harvard finds itself in (New York Times, December 9, 2001). The committee has reviewed the distribution of grades since it last reported in February 2000 on the issue. We have asked the Registrar to make the information we reviewed available on his website. Since we have only one further year of data to add to the troubling picture painted in our earlier report, no corrective trend has emerged. Comparing aggregate data from the fall seems to suggest a trend toward lower grades, but aggregate comparison over the spring suggest the opposite. Some individual units show a trend toward greater compression, while others exhibit movement towards less. The committee plans to determine whether the formal meetings to

discuss grading practices called for in the Faculty Council resolution have taken place in every educational unit.

Report of Activities

Academic Procedures require that "Beginning with the first day of classes in the term for which the students expect to graduate, students should file an application for a degree in the office of the dean. A student who has not filed an application for graduation on or before the announced deadlines for fall graduation and for spring graduation may not be included in the list of graduating seniors." The committee was asked for advice from Executive Associate Provost Bernadette Gray-Little and the College of Arts and Sciences concerning the implementation of this policy. There has been some confusion about when a student might reasonably expect to graduate, which has led to practical problems in preparing for commencement ceremonies. The committee approved the following statement as a reasonable means of implementing the policy outlined above.

All requirements must be completed before the degree can be awarded. A student's name may appear in official University graduation publications (e.g., commencement program) only if the student is on track to complete all requirements in the term in which he/she applies to graduate (i.e., is either enrolled in the necessary course, or , is in the process of completing any incomplete work). For example, if a student applies to graduate at the end of the Spring term, he/she must be enrolled in the courses that are needed to complete the degree by the conclusion of the Spring term. If degree requirements are completed during summer sessions, then the earliest that the student can officially be a candidate for graduation is August. August graduates are recognized in the December commencement program. August graduates may request two free copies of the December commencement program by mail from the Office of the University Registrar. If a student applies to graduate on a given degree award date but does not complete degree requirements, then the student must complete the necessary requirement and re-apply to graduate.

The committee has followed the progress of the efforts underway in the College of Arts and Sciences to revise and update the undergraduate curriculum. It has consulted with Professors Laurie McNeil and Thomas Tweed, who steward that review, and advised them on steps any curricular revisions will need to follow as they move toward consideration before Faculty Council. Current plans project that this may happen in late fall of 2002.

The committee wishes to reaffirm the University's policy on final exams and their scheduling:

Undergraduate courses taught on campus must include a final assessment (i.e. final examination) unless as exception is granted by the Provost. A traditional final examination is written, is administered at a predetermined time as specified in the final examination schedule, and takes place at a designated location. Exceptions to the scheduled time and location of a traditional examination can be granted only by the provost after review and approval of the appropriate department head and the dean.

The committee noted that financial planning for the next academic year project substantial drops in funding. While it is not the charge of this committee to address financial matters, it recognizes that funding decisions have a direct impact on the educational policy of the University. The

committee is concerned with effect on the quality of education traditionally provided at Carolina in the face of budget cuts and simultaneous enrollment growth. This concern prompts us to propose Resolution 2002-4.