

**The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**  
**Annual Report of the Educational Policy Committee to Faculty Council**  
**April 25, 2014**

**Membership:**

Theresa Raphael-Grimm (Chair, Nursing & Medicine, At-Large, 2014), Andrea K. Biddle (Health Policy and Management; At-Large, 2014); Jennifer Coble (Biology, At-Large, 2014), Chris Derickson (University Registrar, ex-officio); Lauren Leve (Religious Studies; At-Large, 2013); Bobbi Owen (College of Arts and Sciences; ex-officio); Mark Schoenfisch (Chemistry, At-Large, 2015); Gidi Shemer\* (Biology, At-Large, 2016) Kristin Reiter (Health Policy and Management; At-Large, 2013); Jeff Spinner-Halev (Political Science, At-Large, 2015); Geetha Vaidyanathan (Economics, At-Large, 2015); Blake O'Connor (Undergraduate Student, Jan. 2013 –May 2014); Xin Liu (Graduate Student, GPSF).

\* Gidi Shemer is serving out the term of Keith Amos (deceased).

**Meetings:**

The Educational Policy Committee (EPC) met monthly: September 12, October 24, November 14, December 12, January 16, February 13 (rescheduled to February 20 because of snow), March 20, April 10, with a last meeting for introductions/orientation and business meeting on May 8, 2014. No meetings were cancelled this academic year. Meetings were 90 minutes in length and held from 9:00-10:30 a.m. in 3020 Steele Hall (except for the re-scheduled meeting on February 20 which was held in Carrington Hall). Minutes of meetings are posted on the EPC Sakai site.

**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... (article 4.6, Faculty Code of University Governance).”

**Summary of Major Activities:**

During the 2013-2014 academic year, the EPC considered the following topics and/or took the following actions:

1. **Drop / Add Period Timeframe Adjustment:** This item carried over from the 2012-2013 year.  
In September, the EPC reviewed the Letter of the UNC General Administration of May 2, 2013 that mandated a change in policy among all constituent campuses that included an adjustment to the students’ drop/add period. During the Fall, EPC members met with members of the Faculty Council and University administration, as well as student leaders to discuss both the immediate and long term implications of this action and its challenge to the autonomy of faculty governance here at UNC-CH. After considerable deliberation and debate, EPC members agreed that it

- was prudent to execute measures to mitigate the negative impact that a 2-week drop period would impose. With that purpose in mind, the EPC, under the guidance of the Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education (Bobbi Owen) and the University Registrar (Chris Derickson) pursued operational changes that could preserve some of the spirit of the original 8-week drop period – that is, to allow students to “take a risk” and explore subject areas that might be foreign or academically challenging without being dissuaded from doing so because of potential GPA consequences. These changes were approved by the EPC in December 2013 and presented to the Faculty Council in the form of two resolutions:
1. The introduction of the internal designation of “WC” (withdraw by choice) after week 2 and through week 8 of the semester with a maximum of 16 hours of WC grades for the duration of a student’s undergraduate career. This change will be applied to the appropriate section of the Undergraduate Bulletin and is captured in Resolution 2014-2. On Complying With the Directive of the Office of General Administration of the University of North Carolina Concerning the Deadline for Dropping Courses
  2. The increase in the number of credits that can be taken Pass/Fail from 11 to 16. This effort is captured in Resolution 2014-3 On Increasing the Number of Credits That Can Be Taken Pass/Fail. Both of these resolutions were approved by Faculty Council in January.
2. **“Pass/D+/D/Fail” grading system:** With changes in the drop/add timeframe and the increase in the number of credits that can be taken “pass/fail” (please see # 1 above) there is heightened awareness of, interest in, as well as implications for, the pass/fail grading system. The EPC has determined that a deliberative process is needed to re-evaluate this Pass/Fail grading system, and that aspects of it are complex enough to warrant a formal EPC subcommittee review. This is planned for the 2014-2015 academic year.
3. **Student Success Standards: Revision of Academic Eligibility Standards:** The eligibility standards for continuation as a “student in good standing” were slightly modified and clarified, and this clarification required changes to some of the wording of the *Undergraduate Bulletin* and will apply to all undergraduate students as of May 13, 2014. This activity is reflected in Resolution 2014-5. On Establishing Undergraduate Student Success Standards (Eligibility) which was approved by the Faculty Council in January.
4. **Revised Guidelines for Senior Honors Thesis:** The Administrative Boards of the General College and the College of Arts & Sciences had approved revised guidelines (dated October 29, 2013) for their

undergraduate students and asked that the EPC extend the policy to undergraduate programs in the professional schools. The changes in eligibility (from a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.2 to 3.3) were the result of documented grade inflation during the past 30 years. With a substantial number of majors reporting average GPAs at or above what had been the current 3.2 GPA minimum threshold for honors thesis completion eligibility, a number of departments had adopted their own higher entrance GPA criteria (e.g., 3.4-3.6) to ensure that honors were awarded the most meritorious students and in some cases because of the lack of advisors (the supply of students often far exceeds the demand in such departments as Economics). Honors Carolina had requested EPC approval to extend revised GPA eligibility standards and thesis guidelines to undergraduate students in the professional schools. After much exploration of data and committee debate, the EPC voted to approve that the Revised Guidelines be adopted campus-wide. This motion was then formulated into Resolution 2014-4. On Raising the Minimum GPA Required for Undertaking an Undergraduate Senior Honors Thesis Project. Faculty Council approved this resolution in January.

5. **Guidelines for Classroom Use of Social Media:** This issue was discussed at length, and draft guidelines were developed during the 2012-2013 academic year. As we began our work this year it became apparent that the landscape of social media was continuing to change and our guidelines needed further revision. We recognized a need to expand our sense of the potential implications of a student's participation in a course-mandated, on-line presence using social media sites in the public (and commercial) domains. Our goal was to identify preliminary guidelines for best practice parameters. A subcommittee (chaired by Jeff Spinner-Halev and included Geetha Vaidyanathan, Kristin Reiter, Blake O'Connor, and Anne Whisnant, with the input from others outside of the EPC), revised an initial draft set of guidelines and condensed them into a more workable form. While multiple aspects of social media use was discussed and debated, the primary concern of the committee, as reflected in the subsequent guidelines, was protecting students' privacy. After much debate and review, the EPC approved the guidelines during our December 2013 meeting. This process culminated in the January with Faculty Council approval of Resolution 2014-6. On Guidelines for Classroom Use of Social Media. It was recognized that this is a working document and that ongoing changes in the landscape of social media use will warrant regular review of and revision to these guidelines.
6. **Proposed Increase to Maximum Credit Hours in a Semester:** The EPC approved a change to the *Undergraduate Bulletin* to reflect increase from 20 to 21 the maximum number of credit hours that a qualifying senior student may take during his/her final semester of study. The rationale for the change is that most courses are 3-credit hours and 20 is not easily

divisible by 3. If students meet the criteria for a course overload, this change will make it easier for Deans to approve an additional course (very few 2-credit hour courses are offered). This policy change does not affect a large number of students. This activity is captured in Resolution 2014-9. On Increasing the Maximum Number of Credit Hours In a Semester from 20-21 (Approved in March).

- 7. Revision to Requests to Change the Date of Final Examination:** This item came as a request to the EPC to consider making a change to the timing under which instructors may request a change in the date of the final exam from “before the first day of final examinations” to “no later than the last day of late registration for that term”, which is one week into classes.

Rationale for this change is consistent with informing students at the beginning of the semester when their final exams will be. Providing students with this information is important to student planning and student success. Faculty requesting such final exam scheduling changes have been rare. The EPC approved this change and it was captured in Resolution 2014-8. On Requests to Change the Date of the Final Exam (Approved in March).

- 8. XF Grade:** This was a major issue, and initiative of the EPC during the 2012-2013 academic year. Final outcome of this initiative occurred after EPC’s 2012-2013 annual report had been submitted. What follows is the language of EPC’s final action on this issue that occurred on April 24, 2013:

**EPC Resolution for the Establishment and Implementation of the “XF” Grade.** “EPC resolves: A) To establish the XF grade. The XF grade can only be assigned as part of the usual penalties of “Reckless and/or Minor” and “Deliberate and Substantial” infractions as presented in the current COSC reform suite. B) That the XF grade be removable (and the grade be changed to an F) after one full semester (fall or spring) has passed. Removal is contingent upon completion of a remedial process such as a non-credit academic integrity seminar. C) That this grade be implemented for all students beginning in December 2014”

Establishment of XF grade was captured in Faculty Council Resolution 2013-13. On Creating the XF Grade (Approved on 4/26/2013)

- 9. Independent Study Policy:** The Independent Study Task Force Report of 2012 and the Campus-Wide implementation of the guidelines presented in that report, was endorsed by Faculty Council as reflected in Faculty Council’s Resolution 2013-6. On Campus-wide Implementation of the Recommendations of the 2012 Independent Study Task Force (3/8/2013). The report was converted to a policy and the EPC reviewed the policy so that it could then be posted as a UPM: University Policy Memorandum. The UPM would also contain a template for a formal Learning Contract

that can be used by faculty with all students engaging in Independent Study. The policy document and the template were reviewed by EPC and approved at our February meeting.

**Other EPC Business Included:**

1. **Transcript Remarks and Transcript Remark Requests:** The EPC has been the body that has evaluated transcript remark requests that are submitted to the Provost's office and forwarded to the EPC for review. During the past several years, remark requests have proliferated and the merits of each have been difficult to evaluate because the EPC had limited evaluation criteria from which to make determinations. Historically, remarks can be curricular in nature but others have not. An EPC subcommittee, chaired by Jennifer Coble and including Bobbi Owen, Blake O'Connor and Chris Derickson, reviewed all the existing transcript remarks and developed guidelines for evaluating the merit of future requests. These guidelines were reviewed and unanimously approved by EPC at our April 2014 meeting.
2. **Disciplinary Suspension and Four-Year Equivalency Determination:** Semesters in Residence. The Honor Court decides whether the semester in which the student is suspended should or should not be counted toward the 8 semester (4-year) equivalency (Semesters taken beyond the 8<sup>th</sup> are subject to a tuition surcharge). In September 2013 the EPC approved the following language for use in the *Undergraduate Bulletin* to clarify: "Unless specified by the adjudicating panel, the term(s) in which disciplinary suspension is active shall not be calculated in the four academic year degree credit hour equivalency."

Report respectfully submitted by Theresa Raphael-Grimm, April 24, 2014.