

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Annual Report of the Educational Policy Committee to Faculty Council
April 24, 2015

Membership:

Jennifer Coble (Chair, Biology, At-Large, 2017); Theresa Raphael-Grimm (Nursing & Medicine, At-Large, 2017); Kimberly Vassiliadis (Library, At-Large, 2017); Lauren Leve (Religious Studies; At-Large, 2016); Gidi Shemer (Biology, At-Large, 2016); GerShun Avilez* (English and Comparative Literature; At-Large, 2015); Kristin Reiter (Health Policy and Management; At-Large, 2016); Mark Schoenfisch (Chemistry, At-Large, 2015); Jeff Spinner-Halev (Political Science, At-Large, 2015); Geetha Vaidyanathan (Economics, At-Large, 2015); Karthik Sundaram (Undergraduate Student); Anel Jaramillo (Graduate Student, GPSF); Chris Derickson (University Registrar, ex-officio); Abigail Panter (College of Arts and Sciences; ex-officio) (* GerShun Avilez served on committee while Lauren Leve was on research leave for the spring semester)

Meetings:

The Educational Policy Committee (EPC) met monthly: September 11, October 23, November 13, December 4, January 15, March 19, April 16, and will have introductions/orientation and business meeting on May 7, 2014. The February 19 meeting was cancelled due to snow. Meetings were 90 minutes in length and held from 9:00-10:30 a.m. in 304 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 2014-2015 academic year, the EPC considered the following topics and/or took the following actions:

- 1. Transcript Remark Guidelines:** In its advisory role to the Registrar, the EPC was asked to evaluate transcript remarks and create a set of guidelines to inform approval of transcript remark requests. In spring 2014, an EPC subcommittee, chaired by Jennifer Coble and including Bobbi Owen, Blake O’Connor and Chris Derickson, reviewed the existing transcript remarks and developed guidelines, which were unanimously approved in April 2014. These guidelines limit transcript remarks to degree related information, selective university-based academic achievements/honors and disciplinary actions. All departments with transcript remarks that did not meet the new

guidelines were informed in August 2014 and UPM #28:Remarks on Student Transcripts was revised to include the new guidelines.

2. UNC Class Finder Grade Data request

UNC Class Finder (www.uncclassfinder.com) is a student designed class search engine that is hosted on UNC's registrar website. In August 2014, Chris Derickson sought EPC consideration of a request by the developers to include grade data with the information provided for each class. EPC members expressed concerns over the potential for students to choose sections based solely on grade data and potential FERPA violations in small classes. The EPC consensus was that grade data should not be included on the university-sponsored application and that University Counsel should be involved in any future considerations.

3. Supporting Student Retention

In the Fall 2015 semester, the EPC initiated an exploration of policies that could support greater student success and retention. Jennifer Coble met with Cynthia Demetriou, director for retention and both Steve Dobbins, the eligibility specialist from Academic Advising and member of the eligibility committee and Lee May, the Associate Dean and Director of Advising attended the November 15th and December 4th meetings respectively. The goal was to seek their expertise and advice. Several policies arose from these conversations that could be the focus of future consideration including:

- two week drop period
- eight semester graduation rule, particularly as applies to transfer students
- current limits on online courses
- EE requirement given limited availability of such courses
- need for a University 101 course
- value of a STEM hub to support students success in STEM courses

4. Grade Replacement Policy

Grade replacement arose as a potential policy to support student success and retention. In addition, the UNC Policy Manual's mandates for campuses develop policies on grade exclusion and/or grade replacement (The UNC Policy Manual 400.1.5 Section F) supported an examination of UNC's current policy. Initial research revealed that many of our peer institutions have grade replacement policies. These policies permit a limited number of course repeats where a higher grade earned from a second attempt is used in GPA calculation (while both remain on transcript). Committee discussion focused on how grade replacement would impact academic eligibility, whether or not the policy would encourage students to continue majors that may not be the best fit and how the policy could impact enrollment in introductory courses. The EPC has requested data on how many UNC students already retake courses, how many earn a higher grade in a second attempt and how grade replacement would impact these students' academic status. Further discussion will occur in Fall 2015.

4. Review of Pass/D+/D/Fail Designations and Utilization

With changes in the drop/add timeframe and the increase in the number of credits that can be taken “pass/fail,” the EPC decided to take a comprehensive look at the pass/fail grading policy. A subcommittee was created with Jeff Spinner-Halev (chair), Gidi Shemer and Kristin Reiter with support from Chris Derickson and Abigail Panter. The subcommittee made the following recommendations

1. Change our current Pass/D/D+/F to simply Pass/Fail. F is fail, D or above is passing. F continues to count in the GPA.
2. Students can take 23 credits altogether P/F, with no more than 16 declared by the student and no more than 13 in University P/F courses.
3. Previous courses taken for a letter grade cannot be repeated on a Pass/Fail basis.
4. The P/F policy be simplified so students can only take one student-elected P/F course during full academic semesters (fall and spring).

The EPC discussed these recommendations in the fall and requested data on the number of students who received a D+ or D in an elected P/F course to determine the impact of recommendation #1 above. A final decision on these recommendations will be made in the May 7th meeting and a resolution will be proposed to Faculty Council at the beginning of the 2015-16 academic year.

5. Class Attendance Policy Update Proposal

Provost Dean and the Student-Athlete Academic Initiative Working Group, proposed an update to the Class Attendance Policy with the purpose of clarifying expectations for both students and instructors on how students can makeup assignments and assessments when an absence is excused. The proposed policy language was discussed in the March 19 and April 16 meetings and several EPC concerns resulted in requests for further revision. Key concerns for the committee include: how instructors determine whether or not absences are excused in cases of illness or emergency, the burden involved in offering makeup exams, particularly for instructors of large classes and the fairness of course policies that increase the weight of a comprehensive final exam to make up for missed exams. Revisions to address these concerns will be made in Fall 2015.

6. Priority Registration

Current Priority Registration policy requires the Registrar to present an annual report to the EPC following an evaluation of whether course selection during priority registration appears to be serving its intended purpose. Specifically, Chris Derickson and Mark Schoenfisch, the EPC Priority Registration Advisory Committee (*PRAC*) representative, examined the enrollment of courses that exceeded the 15% threshold during the priority registration windows. This evaluation did not identify any problematic classes and, thus, no changes to the priority registration policy were recommended.

7. Contextual Grading Report

As the advisory body to the Registrar, the EPC was asked to consider the next steps in the implementation of the contextual grading report (Resolution 2011-3) after technical concerns prompted a delay in implementation in December 2014. The EPC invited Faculty Chair Bruce Cairns, Student Body Vice President Kyle Villemain and Professor Andy Perrin to the January 15th meeting to learn about the history of the policy, the concerns raised by student government and the role of the EPC in the next steps. Contextual Grading was a focus of discussion in the both the March 19 (as February meeting was cancelled due to snow) and April 16 meetings. The following issues merit additional discussion and potential amendments to the resolution:

- Errors in SPA calculations – An error in the SPA calculation of the sample transcript presented to Faculty Council, despite testing, was the cause for alarm that prompted the postponement of the resolution. Chris Derickson has requested a testing period of one year, which would involve making the contextualized transcript available to all students as an unofficial record. This step is essentially a comprehensive user period that would allow for the identification of any other possible errors or scenarios that have not been covered by the programming behind the contextualized transcript. Such an approach would also be a significant communication tool to better familiarize students and the rest of campus with the new transcript.
- Changing SPA and percentile values – Because SPA calculations and percentile ranges are calculated from all of the grades in every course, the existence of temporary grades such as IN and AB, which register as F's in grade calculations, will result in different values when these grades are present versus when they are replaced with permanent grades.
- Point in time reporting - In the original resolution, the implementation of the contextual transcripts would apply to all students. This would result in some students receiving SPA values from calculations of only 1-2 semesters of grade data. The Faculty Executive Committee expressed concern over the impact of this on these students. EPC will assess the impact of point-in-time reporting versus cohort reporting in future discussions.
- Interpretation of contextual information – The committee recommends a postponement of the implementation of the contextual transcripts until data can be collected to assess if the information is clear and correctly interpretable by transcript consumers, how transcript consumers will use the contextual information in evaluating UNC students and how contextual information will influence comparisons between UNC students and students from other institutions. U0iu6

Report respectfully submitted by Jennifer Coble, April 21, 2015.