



November 7, 2012

At its regular meeting on November 5, 2012, the Faculty Executive Committee of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill discussed at length the draft revision of Section 400.1.5 of the UNC Policy Manual as it affects the Course Adjustment Period. Currently, our campus allows students to drop a course without penalty and with no notation entered in the transcript through the eighth week of the semester. The proposed revision of Sec. 400.1.5 would require that the drop period end no later than the census date, which is the tenth class day of the fall and spring semesters. The Faculty Executive Committee strongly urges that this feature of the draft revision be revised to allow individual campuses to choose a drop period that extends through the eighth week of the semester.

We submit that matters concerning the curriculum and the academic regulations that govern the award of authorized degrees are properly delegated to each institution's faculty to the maximum feasible extent. We agree that system-wide policies should "support campus efforts to enhance access, excellence, and undergraduate degree completion in as timely and efficient a manner as possible," but we submit that the Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs Committee's report fails to make a case for how attainment of that goal is enhanced by prohibiting an eight-week drop period.

For many years, the drop period at UNC-Chapel Hill was six weeks. Several years ago, the Faculty Council extended the period to eight weeks as part of a carefully considered "early warning system" that seeks to identify students at risk of failure in particular courses. It was decided at that time that the drop period should not close before students have had at least one graded evaluation. In many courses the first such evaluation occurs as a mid-term examination. A two-week drop period would occur before any evaluation has occurred in many of our courses.

We recognize that shortening the drop period does not prevent a student at risk of failure from withdrawing from the course or choosing some other option that would not result in entry of a failing grade on the transcript. However, we submit that this can place a student at a distinct disadvantage when he or she later applies for admission to a graduate or professional degree program. Competition is often fierce for admission to professional degree programs in areas such as medicine, nursing, dentistry, and law, and in graduate programs where limited faculty resources and limited job opportunities for Ph.D. graduates have led departments to restrict severely graduate admissions. We point out that approximately 40% of our bachelor of arts and bachelor of science graduates go on to graduate study.

In summary, the Faculty Executive Committee of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill submits that an eight-week drop period is in the best interests of the student body of our institution; that our current policy in that regard was adopted after

careful and thorough study; and that limiting the drop period to two weeks will require extensive and possibly expensive revisions to an “early warning system” that has proved highly beneficial to our students.

Members of the UNC-Chapel Hill Faculty Executive Committee

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