

APSC Minutes
03.12.20

Present: Agnieszka Szarecka (AS), Dianne Slager (DS), Suzanne Benet (SuzB), Eric-John Szczepaniak (EJS), Karl Brakora (KB), Paul Fishback (PF), Jamie Owen-DeSchryer (JOD), Student Senate x5 (SS#x), Shawn Bultsma (ShaB), Felix Ngassa (FN), Katlyn Lohmand (KL), Lindsay Corneal (LC)

Recorded by: Jae Basiliere (JB)

1. Discussion of a policy for credit for *partial completion of the course* in cases of long-term emergency closure of the university.

Meeting begins at 9:00am

SuzB: We don't know how quickly we can get back to regular classes. Currently there is a rule that you must assign the number of points listed in your syllabus. We don't want to lock in a rule that prohibits students from earning their points. But, what if we gave faculty the flexibility to let students waive some requirements in emergency situations?

When asked to rule on cases around deviations from the syllabus, SB sides with the students because they deserve the right to earn those points.

If we ended up in emergency circumstances in the future, a new policy like this could be helpful.

ShaB: Our understanding of what is needed is still shifting. Initially: are there existing university policies that allow decisions to be made for an entire course? Is there a way to indicate an emergency grade that gives credit but doesn't impact a student's GPA?

SuzB: We're currently not generous about switching to credit/no credit late in the game. But maybe there are some circumstances where we could make exceptions?

Some students may already know that they will not be successful online; what if they had the option to drop? FLEXIBILITY is the key here.

Another thing: sometimes faculty have attendance policies attached to points. We also need to have room for faculty to modify that.

ShaB: What is the urgency here?

Should we differentiate between short-term (immediate) recommendations and long-term recommendations for what ASPC needs later.

AS: Appalachian State University asked unit heads to compile a list of courses that are impossible to teach online (ex: lab courses). Would we want to issue a recommendation that our unit heads

submit a list of courses that are impossible to teach online? Maybe those are the courses that we could offer a switch to credit/no credit or a passing grade for half completion of the semester.

EJS: It is a good idea to split this out, then we can make recommendations based on that. The drop deadline that Suzanne brought up is also important; it gives students options. If we did this, it would be important to provide students an opportunity to recover some money.

Some students may find themselves in a “homework gap” where they’re returning home to places without good internet. What can the university offer to help accommodate those students?

SS#1: It is a slippery slope to name some courses that are eligible for credit/no credit vs. others that are not? That could create conflict among the student body.

SuzB: We can’t pick and choose which classes are impossible to put online. It couldn’t be based on which course it is whether you have the option to switch to credit/no credit.

With regards to students & their money back: for many of them it will be within the block or could affect their financial aid if they drop below 12 credits. When moving the drop deadline we would need to caution students to check about financial aid—that is beyond our control.

AS: This could also affect time to graduation.

ShaB: In the situation where students can’t access to wifi, maybe we need a special dispensation for those students.

What we’re really asking in this space: is there a policy to allow students credit for *partial* completion of a course.

JB: Can we use rules for assigning incompletes as a guideline?

KB: In ENG, we have frameworks for extending courses into the summer—could we implement some sort of summer makeup options?

SS#2: An overwhelming number of students need to go home and work full time over the summer just to pay their tuition bill. Having to come back to make up coursework would be a huge hardship.

SS#3: If students need to take courses with prereqs over the summer, extending courses into the summer would set back time to degree.

ShaB: As we think about separating short-term vs. long-term recommendation, is there a way we could negotiate with students? Not all professors will need this policy.

We should be telling faculty that we trust them to make decisions. We should be telling students that we trust them, too. This should be the root of our policy.

DS: Our students still need to get their clinical hours. The policy needs to address differential needs from school to school.

KB: Options could include: freedom to move to credit/no credit, incomplete that later changes to c/nc, late withdrawal.

SS#4: SWS classes could present an issue with credit/no credit transitions.

SS#5: Handling this on a case by case basis seems like it would be a lot of labor. Do units have the capacity to handle these kinds of requests?

AS: Among the guideline, there should be some kind of statement that faculty must make reasonable accommodations for students who fall ill.

SS#1: Some students need to know when they will be returning, because housing is requiring folks to leave.

SS#5: We have received messages that we will be required to leave no later than Sunday unless the extenuating circumstances form is approved.

SS#1: Students are being left in the lurch because of the uncertainty around when they will have to leave.

SuzB: MSU has said that their finals will be in-seat, but everything before that will be online. We haven't said that because this is evolving so quickly that we don't know what the best course of action is. I will pass your frustrations along to the Provost's cabinet.

EJS: The policy for dropping courses after March 7th includes a form that requires an explanation and signatures from the professor and the dept chair. It would help students who may need to withdraw from class if we waived the signature requirement. This could especially help Lakers who are directly affected by this virus.

How do we help students leave if they need to? We should maintain the review process, but also provide students more flexibility by simplifying the process.

LIST IN PROGRESS:

The units have the freedom to develop solutions for:

1. Allowing some students in the class to switch to credit/no credit
2. Apply the rules for incompletes to individual students or the whole class
3. Allow late drop without signatures
4. Develop a make-up solution for specific classes
5. Converting all the class to credit/no credit (this needs a qualifier; students should give consent to this)
6. Allow a modification of grading system in a syllabus (around attendance explicitly: other changes would require student consent).

Decisions should be made by March 29th?

KB: We are drafting a policy to send to ECS, yes?

ShaB: Yes, this is a short-term recommendation, but we could decide to extend some of these long-term.

EJS: Could we say that, because of this emergency situation, March 29th is the new drop deadline across the board?

AS: Should we include a note that there are special considerations for students who are in jeopardy of dismissal?

KB: We should have consistency across departments or colleges.

AS: So are you suggesting that all incomplete decisions need to be approved by unit heads? (KB: That could work.)

SS#4: I do not feel comfortable with point #1, if all of my professors changed my grades to credit/no credit, I might not come back to Grand Valley.

SuzB: We need to make it clearer to faculty how modifications of point structures will be allowed under these special circumstances.

JOD: It would be a lot easier for me to prepare for this if I knew when we were going to return to classes.

DS: Given what's happening in the rest of the world, I would assume that we will not resume for the rest of the semester.

EJS: There are still student concerns around credit/no credit—for example, an A student might want grades that will boost their GPA.

ShaB: We are making a list for two different scenarios here. Should we create freedom for professors to offer students grades for mastery?

AS: If students are worried about their performance going down, they should be allowed the options to go to credit/no credit.

LIST IN PROGRESS, V2:

The units have the freedom to develop solutions for students who are concerned about their performance dropping in online learning:

1. Allowing some students in the class to switch to credit/no credit, upon petition.
2. Allow some students a late withdrawal (without signature, through 04.06.20)

Faculty should provide students feedback about their performance in the course no later than 03.29.20

The units have the freedom to develop solutions for students who have already met the course objectives and are satisfied with their current grade.

Other solutions that units should be empowered to execute:

3. Apply the rules for incompletes to individual students or the whole class
4. Develop a make-up solution for specific classes
5. Converting all the class to credit/no credit (this needs a qualifier; students should give consent to this)
6. Allow a modification of grading system in a syllabus (around attendance explicitly; other changes would require student consent).

Special considerations for students on probation or in jeopardy of dismissal—academic standing based on GPA could only increase after this semester; it could not decrease based on this semester's performance.

OR, we are suspending the academic standing policies for the current term, in cases where students would be negatively impacted, until the university resumes normal operation.

Special considerations for students who plan to graduate in April 2020:

Encourage students to check with their advisors and the financial aid office before they make any changes to their schedule!

PF: Can we communicate an expectation that faculty are expected to return some graded work within this period?

LC: What if faculty are already backlogged? Would they have to assess new work, too?

ShaB: We have to provide information about a students' last engagement with the course when we assign F grades, so there's already some kind of system for this in place.

LC: What about our contingent colleagues? Asking for extensive feedback would be a hardship for them.

SS#1: Has anyone considered canceling class for an additional week so we can figure out what is going on?

SuzB: Because our students rely on Spring and Summer classes, we can't shift things back a week. Our calendar doesn't leave us a lot of wiggle room.

There was some discussion around how long we can afford to just cancel classes, but we don't have room to shift.

JOD: What if we drafted some standard syllabus language indicating that the “contract” of the syllabus might change in extenuating circumstances?

SuzB: We have historically treated the syllabus as a binded estimate, but we’re moving more towards a negotiated contract model—things *can* change based on the circumstances.

ShaB: If the student has already met most of the course objectives, and the student is satisfied with their current grade, is there an opportunity for students and faculty to say “I’m good.”

DS: What is the advantage of introducing this?

SS#1: I can speak from experience: I have been in college for 5 years, I would take my standing grades and run.

PF: It is imperative that students in classes that are part of a sequence understand that they will be in trouble in later classes if they take their A and run.

ShaB: This wouldn’t be for every class, it would only be in classes where it is appropriate for the course.

SuzB: The only kind of course where this would really work for are electives that aren’t prereqs. Or, for students who are about to graduate.

ShaB: This seems like a unit-level decision.

SS#3: A big part of my experience here is accepting responsibility for myself. The students that choose to go to this university would benefit from a list of options.

AS: Proposed language—faculty will have the opportunity to assign the current grade as the final grade...

FS: The university is not closing. That makes a problem with the grade assignment language—we are simply transitioning from face to face to online instruction.

SuzB: We are already coming up on a bandwidth issue with faculty transitioning to online—we don’t recommend online courses with large caps for a reason.

ShaB: Is there a differentiation between graduate and undergraduate courses in any of this?

KB: Students should not be allowed to appeal necessary modifications to point structure.

SuzB: Flexibility needs to be the word of the day.

Last 10 minutes of the meeting spent revising our existing notes into a memo to send to ECS.

SAVE FOR THE FUTURE: A discussion about drafting a standard syllabus statement indicating that course requirements may be modified in extenuating circumstances.

KB motions that we convene a subcommittee to finish drafting a policy memo between 11:00-12:00.

Vote to send the memo to ECS as it is modified by the task force who stays behind.

AG motions, PF seconds.

9 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstain.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00am.