

## University Academic Affairs Committee

Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
111 Hurley Convergence Center

**Committee:** Davis Oldham (chair), Karen Anewalt (secretary), Beverly Epps, Rachel Graefe-Anderson, Gonzalo Campos Dintrans

**Ex officio:** Rita Dunston, Tim O'Donnell, John Morello, Wes Hillyard

**Not Present:** Kimberly Williams, Lindsey Kowaki (student representative)

### 1. Old Business

- a. The minutes from the January 2018 meeting were previously approved through online discussion.
- b. Discussion of UMW suspension & probation policy as it relates to retention

Tim O'Donnell presented a series of discussion points related to UMW's policies on academic standing.

Data shows that UMW retention rates dropped beginning in fall 2007 when the thresholds for suspension were last revised. While the change to the thresholds is unlikely to be the only cause for the decline in UMW retention rates, the policy change is likely one contributing factor. The committee examined the data related to the number of students suspended per year and the return rates for suspended students. The Academic Affairs Office and Registrar's Office estimate that about half of the students suspended are first year students and the other half are sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

After discussion, the committee feels that returning the threshold levels to the pre-2007 ranges will still provide students with adequate notice so that they can improve their grades and recover academically. The committee approved the attached motion to adjust threshold levels for suspension.

The committee feels that it is essential to provide students with early notice when they may be approaching probation. The committee discussed a proposal to add a standing of "academic warning" to proceed probation. The first time that a student's overall cumulative UMW GPA falls below a 2.00, the student will be placed on academic warning. This will allow advisors and Academic Services to identify students facing challenges early and potentially make it easier to provide support services to such students before the GPA reaches probation thresholds. If after the semester of warning, the student's GPA remains above the probation thresholds, the student will continue to be in good standing. If after the semester of warning, the student's cumulative GPA falls below the probation thresholds, then the student will be placed on academic probation. The committee approved the attached motion to add a standing of "academic warning" to proceed probation.

The current probation policy holds students who have significant AP credits or transfer credits to a higher standard because they must meet the higher GPA thresholds to avoid probation and suspension. Some of these students are transfer students bringing 60 credits and intending to graduate in 2 years, others are BLS students with as many as 90 credits, and some are freshmen with significant AP/IB credit. The committee discussed challenges for all three categories of students. The committee feels that the best predictor of academic success at UMW is a student's grades for courses taken at UMW. The committee approved the attached motion to calculate the hours for standing based only on UMW hours.

Under current policies, students under first suspension may enroll at another college or university for transfer to UMW after obtaining written approval from Academic Services and the Registrar. However, students under second suspension may not do so. The committee discussed advantages to allowing students on second suspension to enroll in a limited number of courses at another institution. Changing the policy will allow Academic Services to better advise students who are facing suspension about options. The committee approved the attached motion to change the policy to allow all students on suspension to take a limited number of courses at another college or university for transfer to UMW.

## 2. New business

### a. Revision to the faculty handbook section on course syllabi

John Morello changed the committee with examining the handbook language related to the required items for course syllabi. The committee agrees that policies are in place to require several additional items in all syllabi and that these policy changes are not reflected in the current handbook language. The committee approved the attached motion to update the Faculty Handbook language related to course syllabi to reflect the need to include an accessibility statement, course recording statement, and Title IX policy statement.

### b. John Morello charged the committee with reviewing the current faculty handbook section on attendance policies:

[http://publications.umw.edu/undergraduatecatalog/academic\\_policies/enrollment/](http://publications.umw.edu/undergraduatecatalog/academic_policies/enrollment/)

The committee spent time discussing the current policy and the pros and cons of including or excluding language stipulating specific attendance policies in various scenarios in the Faculty Handbook. Davis will follow up with the CAS Faculty Council to solicit broader feedback and the COB and COE representatives will solicit feedback from their colleges. Discussion will resume at the March UAA meeting.

### c. Deciding the role of academic affairs in clarifying issues related to course evaluations

The committee noted that issues related to course evaluations are listed in the charge for the Academic Affairs Committee as well as the charge for Faculty Affairs Committee. As we understand our role, Academic Affairs would be responsible for recommending content

changes to the course evaluation instrument while questions about the role of the instrument in the faculty evaluation process would be the role of Faculty Affairs. No change or action is recommended at this time.

3. Adjourn 3:30pm

**MOTION:** Return the suspension threshold levels to the pre-2007 levels and add a 5<sup>th</sup> tier to split the “61-120” credit threshold into two categories.

**THE ISSUE:**

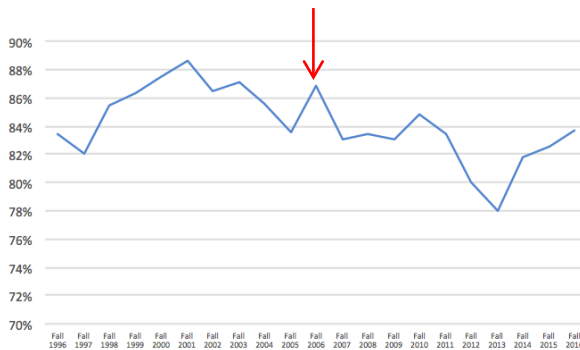
Prior to 2007, UMW had lower GPA thresholds for a minimum overall cumulative GPA as demonstrated by the side-by-side comparison contained in the chart below:

Comparing Past to Present GPA Minimums			
Prior to 2007		2007 to Present	
Number of Credits	Minimum Overall Cumulative GPA	Number of Credits	Minimum Overall Cumulative GPA
12-30	1.25	12-30	1.60
31-60	1.50	31-45	1.80
61-90	1.75	46-60	1.90
91-122+	2.00	61-122	2.00

Today’s more stringent minimum GPA requirements went into effect with the 2007-2008 Academic Catalog. A review of the minutes of the Academic Affairs Committee from 2006 reveals that the goal of these changes was to provide students with earlier notice about their academic standing, thereby offering them more time to resolve the situation. At the time, it was argued then that the proposed changes would not have a significant impact on retention.

While there are undoubtedly many factors that underpin retention rates, there is reason to believe that the 2006 change in the GPA thresholds is one contributing factor to the observed decline.

Overall Retention Rate (20 years)



Consider that the 5-year average retention rate in the five years preceding this change was 86% while the 5-year average following the change was 83.5%. A return to pre-2007 GPA thresholds would certainly reduce the number of first-time full-time students prevented from returning to UMW for the fall semester of their second year. For example, if the pre-2007 GPA thresholds were applied to the students who were suspended at the end of spring 2017, UMW would have suspended 42 fewer students.

The case for changing UMW’s GPA thresholds becomes even more compelling when considering that several competitors have minimum GPA thresholds that suspend far fewer students. For example, James Madison University, George Mason University, and Christopher Newport University have minimum GPA thresholds that set a lower threshold for suspension. In all cases, if these minimum GPA thresholds were in place at UMW, the number of suspensions would decline as shown in the following table:

<b>Suspension Threshold Comparisons</b>				
	<b>UMW</b>	<b>JMU</b>	<b>GMU</b>	<b>CNU</b>
<b>Spring 2016</b>	125	96	45	97
<b>Fall 2016</b>	67	52	19	45
<b>Spring 2017</b>	113	91	42	89
<b>Fall 2017</b>	78	54	22	48
<i>(indicates the # of UMW students suspended under each threshold)</i>				

The premise behind the 2006 change to the GPA minimum was that higher thresholds would provide students with earlier notification of their academic jeopardy. This objective can be met in other ways. For example, the Office of Academic Services has a variety of tools and resources available to effectively communicate with students about their overall academic health and connect them to the resources and services which can assist in reaching their academic goals.

The committee recommends returning the suspension threshold levels to the pre-2007 levels and adding a 5<sup>th</sup> tier to split the “61-120” credit threshold into two categories.

**CURRENT CATALOG LANGUAGE:**

Number of Attempted Credits	Minimum Overall Cumulative GPA
12-30	1.60
31-45	1.80
46-60	1.90
61-122+	2.00

**PROPOSED CATALOG LANGUAGE:**

Number of Attempted Credits	Minimum Overall Cumulative GPA
12-30	1.25
31-45	1.50
46-60	1.75
61-90	1.85
91-120+	2.00

**MOTION:** Add the standing of “academic warning” to precede probation.

**THE ISSUE:**

At present, first-time full-time students, who are placed on probation at the end of their first semester and who fail to raise their overall GPA above the threshold in the spring semester are placed on suspension in the fall. In many cases, a single semester does not offer students enough time to improve their GPA sufficiently (either through retakes or quality point accumulation). Adding in a semester on “warning,” prior to the probation semester will provide greater opportunity for students to turn around an errant semester and more fully implement an academic recovery plan. The committee recommends introducing a standing of “academic warning” such that any student whose cumulative UMW GPA falls below 2.00 for the first time is placed on warning.

**NEW CATALOG LANGUAGE:**

*Warning. A student is placed on academic warning the first time the student’s overall cumulative UMW GPA falls below 2.00. Students on warning who achieve an overall cumulative UMW GPA of 2.00 or higher at the conclusion of either the fall or spring semester will be removed from warning. Any student previously on warning whose overall cumulative UMW GPA falls again below a 2.00 at the conclusion of either the fall or spring semester will be placed on probation.*

**MOTION:** Change the policy on calculating academic standing to calculate academic standing based only on hours earned at UMW.

**THE ISSUE:**

Currently, evaluation of academic standing is determined by the number of attempted credits which is calculated “by adding the UMW attempted hours (including UMW graded credits, PA, SA, UN, W and repeated credits) to the AP credit, IB credit, CLEP credit, Cambridge credit, and transfer credit hours.” This disproportionately impacts students who accumulated credit while in high school and/or are transfer students, many of who come in to UMW with 60 or more credits. The committee feels that the best predictor of academic success at UMW is a student’s grades for courses taken at UMW. The committee approved the attached motion to calculate the hours for standing based only on UMW hours.

**CURRENT CATALOG LANGUAGE:**

Evaluation of academic standing is based on two factors: the number of attempted credits and the minimum overall cumulative GPA. For both full-time and part-time students, the number of attempted credits is calculated by adding the UMW attempted hours (including UMW graded credits, PA, SA, UN, W and repeated credits) to the AP credit, IB credit, CLEP credit, Cambridge credit, and transfer credit hours. The minimum overall GPA is calculated on UMW GPA credits (Grades of PA, SA, UN and W are not considered in calculating the UMW GPA.)

**PROPOSED CATALOG LANGUAGE:**

Evaluation of academic standing is based on two factors: the number of attempted credits **at UMW** and the minimum overall cumulative GPA. For both full-time and part-time students, the number of attempted credits is calculated by adding the UMW attempted hours (including UMW graded credits, PA, SA, UN, W and repeated credits) ~~to the AP credit, IB credit, CLEP credit, Cambridge credit, and transfer credit hours.~~ The minimum overall GPA is calculated on UMW GPA credits (Grades of PA, SA, UN and W are not considered in calculating the UMW GPA.)

**MOTION:** Change the policy on taking courses at another institution while a student is on suspension so that students on second suspension can take a limited number of courses at another college or university for transfer to UMW.

**THE ISSUE:**

Currently, students under first suspension may enroll at another college or university for transfer to UMW after obtaining written approval from Academic Services and the Registrar. However, students under second suspension may not do so. In some cases, it may be advantageous and advisable for a student to enroll in a limited number of courses during their year suspended from UMW. This merely makes it possible for Academic Services to incorporate this recommendation in the academic recovery plan.

**CURRENT CATALOG LANGUAGE:**

A student under first suspension may take up to two courses at another college or university for transfer to UMW but must obtain written approval from Academic Services and the Registrar before registering for classes during the semester of suspension.

**PROPOSED CATALOG LANGUAGE:**

A student under ~~first~~ suspension may take up to two courses at another college or university for transfer to UMW but must obtain written approval from Academic Services and the Registrar before registering for classes during the semester of suspension.



**MOTION: Update Faculty Handbook section on course syllabi to include language requiring the inclusion of an accessibility statement, course recording statement, and Title IX policy statement.**

### **THE ISSUE**

It has been several years since the *Faculty Handbook* statement on course plans and the syllabus has been reexamined and updated. A change in how the Office of Disability Resources refers to its syllabus statement, along with expectations to include additional syllabi statements, have created a need to alter the *Faculty Handbook* language regarding the items that should be included in a syllabus. The handbook language related to course syllabi should be updated to include additional items required by UMW policies.

### **CURRENT LANGUAGE ([http://publications.umw.edu/facultyhandbook/section\\_5/policies/#hb546](http://publications.umw.edu/facultyhandbook/section_5/policies/#hb546))**

**5.4.6 Course Plans and the Syllabus** With the exception of courses for which a common syllabus is agreed upon by those teaching it, course plans are the responsibility of the individual instructor. Instructors have the right to determine the requirements of the courses they teach, based on the course description as published in the appropriate *Academic Catalog* and within the limitations of college, department and university policy. Faculty should provide students with a course syllabus containing, at a minimum, the following: (a) instructor identification and contact information, (b) course identification, (c) course goals and objectives, (d) required materials (textbooks, lab manuals, etc.), (e) course calendar (assignment due dates, tests, etc.), (f) guidelines for class participation, (g) basis for determining final grades and mid-semester progress reports (in undergraduate courses, where required), (h) accommodations for students with disabilities, and (i) instructor's statement of adherence to the Honor System. Individual colleges and departments may determine additional requirements for syllabus preparation.

### **PROPOSED LANGUAGE (new language in red; text in blue indicates a new hyperlink)**

**5.4.6 Course Plans and the Syllabus** With the exception of courses for which a common syllabus is agreed upon by those teaching it, course plans are the responsibility of the individual instructor. Instructors have the right to determine the requirements of the courses they teach, based on the course description as published in the appropriate *Academic Catalog* and within the limitations of college, department and university policy. Faculty should provide students with a course syllabus containing, at a minimum, the following: (a) instructor identification and contact information; (b) course identification; (c) course goals and objectives; (d) student learning outcomes, including (when applicable) general education learning outcomes; (e) required materials (textbooks, lab manuals, etc.); (f) course calendar (assignment due dates, tests, etc.); (g) guidelines for class participation; (h) basis for determining final grades and mid-semester progress reports (in undergraduate courses, where required); (i) accessibility statement; (j) course recording policy statement; (k) Title IX policy statement; and (l) instructor's statement of adherence to the Honor System. Individual colleges and departments may determine additional requirements for syllabus preparation. **Sample syllabi statements for addressing accessibility, the recording policy, and the Title IX policy are available at the [Provost's web site](#).** **Instructors should distribute the syllabus to students no later than the first scheduled meeting of the course (or the first day of the semester/term for fully online courses). Instructors are required to submit a digital copy of the syllabus to the department chair and/or college dean's office in each semester/term they are teaching.**