

University Academic Affairs Committee
Agenda

Wednesday, April 11th, 2018 at 2 pm
111 Hurley Convergence Center

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

Ex officio: Tim O'Donnell, Wes Hillyard, Brian Ogle

1. February minutes were approved via email. The March meeting was cancelled due to an inclement weather closure.

2. Old business

a. Does the attendance policy in the Undergraduate Academic Policy need revision?

The committee had a lively discussion of this important and complex issue. Many faculty members are extremely flexible and willing to work with students. All assignments are not equally easy to replicate in a make-up situation. It's impossible to list all legitimate reasons why a student might need to miss a class and impossible to dictate when it is or isn't appropriate for faculty to provide an equivalent make-up assignment. Committee members noted that there's already an established procedure for students to appeal a faculty's decision/policy.

Discussion of the issue will continue at the first meeting in the fall.

3. New business

a. Change in requirements to walk at graduation (motion from UFC)

UFC requested that the committee consider changing the policy for students to participate in commencement to allow students with 3 or fewer remaining classes to participate. The current policy states that students with one remaining course

can petition the Registrar's office and if approved, may participate in commencement.

Information about the previous policy (where students were not allowed to participate in commencement unless all degree requirements were completed) was discussed.

The current policy says that students can petition to participate if they are short just one course. Justifications included on student petitions a parent being deployed and unable to attend in the future, family illness, unexpectedly failing a course during final exams, etc. The incomplete course may carry any number of credits. Some departments allow students to take a 12 credit course (such as internship) and may offer 6 credit courses, so while a petitioning student may be short a single course, the number of non-complete credits can vary significantly. The current policy wording is difficult to defend to students who may be short two courses totaling 6 credits (who will not be allowed to participate) since those short one course totaling 12 credits may be permitted to participate. Students view this as unfair.

Brian looked at the policies at George Mason University, James Madison University, The College of William & Mary, and Christopher Newport University. All of these allow students to participate in commencement if they have an expected graduation date of the August following commencement. This is more flexible than our policy because it allows for more than one course to be outstanding. But it's also less flexible because the student is required to show

proof of enrollment in summer courses that will allow them to complete their final requirements before the fall semester begins. Our policy allows students to complete their final course one or more semesters following commencement.

The committee had a discussion about the meaning of commencement. It can be viewed as a celebration of a degree conferred or it can be viewed as a celebration of 4 years of effort and accomplishments.

The committee will gather additional insight and data from the Commencement Advisory Committee and resume the discussion at the first meeting in the fall.

4. Officers for next year

Several committee members are willing to serve as an officer next year but are waiting to learn of additional committee or departmental assignments. We will conduct elections via email.

5. Adjourn 3:00pm