

**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