

University Academic Affairs Committee
Agenda

September 12th, 2018
2 pm, HCC 310

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

Attending Ex officio: Rita Dunston, Tim O'Donnell, Wes Hillyard

Student representatives: Jordan Seutteran

1. Approval of previous minutes

The minutes were previously approved electronically and posted to the UFC website.

2. Old business

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

- i. The current attendance policy says that requests to reschedule work missed due to religious observations and military service will be honored. And the policy says that absences due to jury duty won't be penalized.
- ii. We recognize that there are many rich learning experiences that might cause a student to miss a class including representing the university in officially-sanctioned activities such as traveling to a professional conference to present their research, serving as a national officer in a recognized student organization, or being engaged in competition as a member of the debate team or one of UMW many intercollegiate athletic teams. Additionally, students may have a legitimate reason to miss class due to commuting challenges or because they are experiencing a short-term disability. The committee reviewed the existing attendance policy in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog with these items in mind.
- iii. The committee feels that creating a list of all legitimate reasons would be unwieldy and would be sure to exclude items that most faculty would consider legitimate reasons for absences, at least under some circumstances.
- iv. Instead the committee feels that removing the word "entirely" from the language would be appropriate. This would allow faculty the flexibility to

make decisions about what absences (beyond jury duty, military service, and religious observations) to excuse. If students and faculty cannot come to a mutual understanding, then the student has the option of following the academic or non-academic dispute procedures already in place to seek a resolution.

Current Undergraduate Catalog Language:

*A primary responsibility of students is class attendance. Learning is an experience which requires active participation, and the University expects participation of students in all their scheduled classes be they lectures, online collaborations, laboratories, seminars, studios, field trips or other types of activities. It is understood that occasional absences are unavoidable, but the student is responsible for his or her decision to miss a particular class meeting. In deciding to miss a class, a student must be aware that he or she is accountable, nonetheless, for any test or quiz and all assignments, material covered, and announcements made in that class. Faculty are **entirely** at their discretion about whether or not to allow a student to make up missed assignments. Furthermore, class participation itself is an appropriate criterion for grading and a student's failure to participate can be expected to affect his or her grade in the course. Failure to drop or withdraw from a course that the student is not attending may result in a final grade of F.*

- v. The committee will consider adding language in the attendance policy pointing to both the academic and non-academic dispute policies.
- vi. Before drafting the proposed language, the committee would like to look at the language used by other schools related to excused absences. Tim will find several examples and distribute them via email.

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

- i. UFC asked us to reconsider the policy excluding students with more than one course remaining in their degree requirements from participating in commencement. The request proposes allowing students who have three or fewer courses remaining to participate in commencement.
- ii. Additionally, the Provost has asked that we create a procedure through which student can appeal decisions related to commencement participation or create a policy that says that no exceptions will be considered.
- iii. Rita spoke about the volume of student who are excluded each year under the current policy and the state of the current appeal process. Most students start their appeal with the Registrar's Office.

1. There were about 60 appeals in the last academic year.
 2. The group of students who walks without completing the requirements does not have a good record of later completing the requirements and earning their degrees.
 3. When students aren't satisfied with the Registrar's decision, they move up the chain to the Associate Provost for Academic Engagement & Student Success, then the Provost, then the President.
 4. There are two main categories of students who appeal. Category 1 appeals in April because they realize that they are short on required courses or anticipate failing a required course. Category 2 appeals in May just after final grades post when they discover that they did not pass a required course or did not earn the minimum GPA to graduate.
 5. Currently, students do not provide a rationale for their appeal. They just state what they want and say why.
- iv. The group discussed whether commencement should be viewed more as a culminating academic event or celebration of a UMW journey. If it is a culminating academic event, it makes sense to ensure participating students have met all requirements. If it's a celebration of achievements, then completing all requirements before participating is less critical.
1. Challenges with allowing students to apply to walk "whenever" were discussed including limits on seating for graduates, families/friends, etc. We'd also have to create a way to "code" the students for commencement so that the non-seniors receive mailings, notifications, etc.
- v. The group discussed whether it makes more sense to limit the credits that are incomplete rather than courses that are incomplete to ensure more consistency across all courses. (Because students have proposed completing a 12 credit internship as a single course to finish.) Having a credit limit is less ambiguous.
- vi. The group considered creating an appeals committee. This group would have the final word and no higher appeals would be heard.
1. Including a representative from Student Affairs, potentially Cedric Rucker, was discussed.

2. Two primary models of committee were discussed 1. A Provost appointed committee similar to the committee on academic standing and 2. A smaller committee similar to the retroactive withdrawal committee. We also need to determine who the appointed committee member is who will be responsible for coordinating all of the paperwork for the appeals. Currently the Registrar's office notifies students when they fail to meet requirements.
 3. Whatever the makeup of the committee, members will need to respond quickly to calls to hear appeals, particularly during the few days between senior grades (posted Monday evening)/transfer credits which arrive Tues, and commencement on Saturday.
 4. There should be a deadline for appeals after which exceptions won't be considered. The Weds prior to commencement was suggested as a potential deadline.
- vii. Rita has already looked at several other institutions that have policies similar to ours. She is going to gather data about additional school policies and also who is on the appeals committee (if there
3. New business for this semester

a. Open/Low-Cost Resources Policy

In early 2018, the Virginia State Legislature passed HB 454, which states:

The governing board of each public institution of higher education shall implement policies, procedures, and guidelines that encourage the adoption and use of low-cost and no-cost open educational resources in courses offered at such institution. Such guidelines may include provisions for low-cost commercially published materials.

We have been charged to develop a response to HB454 in consultation with the OpenUMW group.

- i. We need to make create language for this new policy and eventually it needs to go to the BOV. Tim will bring a draft of proposed language to the next UAA meeting.
- ii. Several schools are listing ranges of textbook costs on the course schedule. The group discussed challenges with this approach specifically when the instructor or text is unknown at the time the schedule goes live. The group also discussed enrollment challenges that may be created when textbook costs become known pre-registration.
- iii. Davis will invite Steve Greenlaw to the next meeting to share the work done by OpenUMW.

b. A student group has requested that we consider closing UMW for Election Day in order to support civic engagement.

- i. The committee will be gathering data about what other universities are doing (closing, cancelling classes, promoting special programming, or excusing absences). Each committee member will attempt to find a university that is doing something in recognition of Election Day. We will discuss findings at the next meeting.
- ii. Jordan, the student representative shared information that student government received recently about the proposal. The petitioning student group doesn't want to close the University but does want to cancel classes or have excused absences for civic engagement activities (driving shuttles to the polls, going home to vote, etc.). At this time, the group is still gathering petition signatures.
- iii. We will consider this issue at the next meeting.

c. Revision of the credit hour policy

This agenda item was tabled until the next meeting.

4. Adjourn 3:32