

University Academic Affairs Committee
Agenda

October 10th, 2018
2 pm, HCC 310

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

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

Student representatives: Jordan Seutteran

Not here: Jane Huffman, Kimberly Williams

1. Approval of previous minutes

- a. The minutes were approved electronically prior to the meeting.

2. Old business

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

- i. Our current attendance policy includes religious observances, jury duty, and military service as absences for which students have recourse and can expect to make-up missed work.
- ii. The committee considered whether our list of excused absences should be broader to include items that most faculty members would view as legitimate reasons for missing class. The list of items qualifying as excused absences at various Virginia state schools was considered. Most schools provide a broader list of qualifying events. The committee discussed pros and cons of expanding our list and determined that minimally students should be allowed to make-up work missed during participation in NCAA athletic

competitions, participation in a UMW academic team competition (example: debate team), or while presenting at a conference, in addition to the events covered in our current policy.

- iii. New language should be added to the attendance policy stating that students are required to notify faculty no later than the end of the drop/add period about scheduled absences. This will allow faculty to communicate with students in the event that the student needs to enroll in an alternate section/course due to unresolvable conflicts caused by scheduled absences.
- iv. Additional language should be added to the attendance policy stating that only enrolled students may attend classes.
- v. The current process by which faculty are notified of absences was considered and compared to the process used by other VA state schools. Currently, Academic Services will send email notifications to faculty for students with concussions and significant illnesses. Our current process provides more notification than most schools considered. Students should continue to initiate communication about planned absences.
- vi. John & Tim will create a draft of the updated policy and the committee will review it at the next meeting.

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

- i. The committee continued its discussion of the proposal to allow students with more than 1 outstanding course to participate in commencement.
- ii. Rita shared her research about the policies of other VA state schools.
 - 1. None of the other schools have an appeals process related to their commencement participation policy.
 - 2. Some schools will allow student participation provided the student meets a GPA threshold (example: 2.0 in the major/2.0 overall) and 1 course left.
 - 3. Some schools allow participation if the student can finish in the subsequent semester (ie. summer session). This becomes difficult to regulate as students can complete several credits at another institution and transfer them back to UMW to complete their degree requirements.
 - 4. Some schools require that all requirements be met in order to participate in commencement.
- iii. The committee discussed challenges with our current policy including reasons that students often request to participate in commencement without completing all degree requirements.
- iv. The committee feels that having the policy to allow students to participate in commencement in cases where they are missing 1 course is problematic because it encourages students to find loopholes (taking a single internship course of 12 credits to

complete requirements, etc.) but doesn't provide enough flexibility for other students (who may be on track to graduate and planning to participate in commencement but perform poorly on multiple final exams due to short-term illness).

- v. The committee will propose a new policy in which students who are on track to complete all degree requirements as of the beginning of the spring semester will be eligible to participate in commencement. This will be verified by senior checksheet at the start of classes in the January preceding commencement.
 1. Students who at the beginning of the spring semester are enrolled in all of the courses needed to graduate as verified by their advisor and Registrar's office will be eligible to participate in commencement. This will be true even if they do not pass one or more of their courses at the end of the semester when final grades are posted.
 2. Students who at the beginning of the Spring semester are not enrolled in one or more courses required for their degree will not be eligible to participate in commencement in May. There will no longer be exceptions made for students who need to complete 1 additional course.
 3. The new policy will allow students substantial time to communicate with family members and other potentially attending commencement about their status as eligibility for commencement will be definitively known in January.

4. If the new policy is adopted, the Registrar's Office will be more aggressive about moving the expected graduation date for students who are ineligible (for example, have more than 18 credits to complete in the Spring). Currently the students are notified and asked if they would like to update their expected graduation date. Under the new policy, the Registrar's Office will notify the student of the missing requirement/s and tell them that their expected graduation date has been updated (rather than offering a choice). Notifications will be made early in the Spring semester to provide students with ample notice.
- vi. Additional language should be added to the policy stating that participation in commencement does not obligate the University to award a degree.
- vii. Davis will work on drafting an update to the policy for the catalog and the committee will review the draft at the next meeting.
- viii. At the direction of the Provost, the committee also discussed the appropriate appeals process for commencement participation decisions.
 1. Reasons that students appeal decisions were reviewed. Some of these should be reduced under the proposed new policy, as there will not be last minute changes of plan due to final course grades.

2. Reasons that students appeal will likely include family concerns, health concerns, travel concerns, and other extenuating circumstances. The committee feels that the existing Student Affairs & Campus Life Advisory Committee may be an appropriate group to vet appeals. Davis will discuss this idea with the chair of the committee.
3. The committee will continue discussion of appeals after reviewing the policy draft at the next meeting.

c. UMW policy on open textbooks

- i. Rosemary Arneson brought an update from the Open UMW group.
 1. The Open UMW group has been studying the SCHEV directive on open textbooks (OTs) and open education courses. In the document, the idea of an open education course isn't clearly defined.
 2. The underlying idea is that textbooks should be affordable. The library has a large collection of ebooks that are not open textbooks but are available free of charge to students through paid subscriptions held by the library. Faculty should check with the library to see if a free ebook is available for an adopted commercial text.
 3. The Simpson Library staff is available to help faculty find open education texts, write new open education resources, and understand Creative Commons Licensing.

4. Many university libraries (including Simpson) participate in an OT network. Erin Wysong is the trained OT rep at UMW. (With appropriate funding) Simpson would be willing to run faculty workshops, offer stipends to faculty to review open textbooks (to create a peer-review type process for open textbooks). At the state-level, Virginia's Academic Library Consortium (VIVA) is working to hire a staff person to work specifically with OTs.
- ii. Rosemary and Erin will draft a policy about OT use at UMW and the type of OT support available to the UMW community. Because this will ultimately become Board policy, we will be mindful about not including unfunded mandates. Rosemary and Erin will share the draft with us so that we can continue to collaborate on the policy.
- iii. The future policy may need to include procedures for faculty about information that will be provided to the Registrar's office and bookstore.

d. Request to close UMW for election day to support civic engagement

- i. Jordan Seutteran, student representative, brought us an update from SGA related to student sentiments about election day. The student group initiating this request is still working to gather student signatures in support of the idea. SGA is now involved as well.
- ii. The committee examined policies and programming used at other schools to support civic engagement on election day. The

committee discussed the findings and recommended forwarding the extensive documentation to SGA and the student group so that they can provide a more cohesive plan as they move forward.

e. Revision of the credit hour policy

- i. SACS has implemented the federal regulations defining credit hours (<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Credit%20Hours.pdf>). UMW is compliant with this policy, which already suggests means for evaluating alternative delivery methods, studio work, practica, etc. Each credit hour is awarded for 1 contact hour plus 2 hours of work outside of class or “reasonable approximates”.

3. New business

a. Students selling course materials online (potential honor violation, author attribution)

- i. This issue was tabled. John recommended referring faculty to D.6.12, the existing Policy on Recording & Distribution of Course Materials.

(<https://www.boarddocs.com/va/umw/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=ATZSXG724B54>)

4. Adjourn 4:00pm

The next meeting is Monday, November 12th, 2:30 pm, HCC 210.