

Mid-semester Progress Reports

Rationale: The Undergraduate Academic Catalog states that “In the middle of each semester, students are notified by the Office of the Registrar if their performance in a course is reported to be unsatisfactory.” However, at present, UMW’s mid-semester progress reporting is uneven, untrackable, and it is often unclear what an Unsatisfactory (or the absence of one) report at the midpoint of a course means to a student. Not all faculty file midterm progress reports. And when there are no “U’s” or “N’s” to report in a particular course, Banner does not create a record even if the instructor enters “submit” because the system is only designed to record U’s and N’s. The challenge for students, as well as advisors, is that an early alert designed to offer actionable insights regarding mid-semester progress provides only limited and sometimes confusing information. Does the absence of a “U” mean progress is sufficient? Did the instructor file mid-semester progress reports? And what does a “U” mean?

A more concerted effort to communicate progress to students would have several benefits:

- It would provide students an opportunity to make adjustments, including withdrawing from a course before the deadline;
- It would provide uniform information to all students, rather than the status quo’s variability according to instructor;
- It would provide all advisors with more complete information to advise appropriately including during the advising period.

In addition, it would provide the Office of Academic Services with better information to structure interventions. Over the past two years, the Office of Academic Services has designed several intervention strategies whose effectiveness could be further enhanced with more complete midterm information. For example, all students who receive one or more mid-term deficiency marks are emailed with information about the withdrawal process and are asked to contact their academic advisor to discuss progress and any necessary course adjustments. In addition, students who receive 1 or more U’s in any class in which peer tutoring is offered are sent an individual note to inform them of tutoring options. In addition, students who receive multiple U’s are invited to meet with a Peer Academic Consultant and the Coordinated Care Team (a cross division team focused on supporting these students) reviews and coordinates follow-up based upon residential status. Such interventions have been proven to increase student success, including retention and timely completion.

Such a tack is common across both the nation and around the Commonwealth. Nationally, approximately 70% of baccalaureate institutions require mid-term grades as a critical student success indicator. Four-year public institutions in the Commonwealth also have more comprehensive approaches than UMW. While different variations exist – including letter grades, lower-level courses, a focus on first-year students, required reporting – a majority of our competitors provide students and advisors with significantly more information about their academic progress and are seeing good results. A survey conducted by UMW’s Office of the Registrar’s revealed that institutions who have implemented more comprehensive mid-semester reporting, such as Christopher Newport University and Virginia Commonwealth University, have realized significant student success benefits, including enhanced retention.

Faculty will still record “N”s for never attended.

Proposal: Starting in Fall 2020, all faculty who are teaching undergraduate courses will be required to enter mid-semester grade reports for all undergraduates (excluding 8 week courses) into Banner by the

end of the 8th week of classes. To provide more clarity, all students will be marked as either “Satisfactory,” “Marginal” or “Unsatisfactory” performance.

Catalog Language:

Mid-Semester Grade Report. In the middle of each semester, students **in all undergraduate (except 8 week courses)** are notified by the Office of the Registrar if whether their performance in a course is reported to be **Satisfactory, Marginal or Unsatisfactory**. Although the report is neither entered on a student’s permanent record nor sent to parents or guardians, mid-semester progress reports are posted in Banner. Marginal and Unsatisfactory reports are sent to advisors. Because **an “M” is an indication that a student’s performance could become unsatisfactory and** a “U” is a warning that significant improvement is needed, the student should consult instructors, advisors, and/or the Office of Academic Services for assistance.

Faculty Handbook Language:

5.4.6 Course Plans and the Syllabus Faculty should provide students with a course syllabus containing, at a minimum, the following (h) basis for determining final grades and mid-semester progress reports (in undergraduate courses, ~~except eight-week courses~~ **where required**);

5.4.9 Reporting Student Enrollment, Progress, and Final Grades Each faculty member must submit final course grades, and mid-semester progress reports in undergraduate courses, ~~except eight-week courses~~ **when required**

6.3 MINIMAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA AND ANNUAL EVALUATIONS Widely (if not universally) within the academic profession, faculty performance is evaluated in three areas of endeavor; teaching, scholarly/creative/professional activity, and service. In all three areas, certain activities and performance levels are taken for granted within what all faculty recognize as basic and minimal professional responsibilities. These include, for example, support of the Honor Code (see Appendix B), adherence to the Statement on Community Values (see 1.3), the provision of appropriate course syllabi, the prompt return to students of graded work, **the submission of final course grades and mid-semester progress reports**

6.3.2 TEACHING

Score 1 Evidence that performance in teaching needs improvement may include: problematic scores and/or problematic comments by students reported by the student course surveys; peer evaluation of teaching and/or course materials that raise concerns about the quality of the course material or the strategies of instruction; a record of student complaints reported directly to the chair or dean; a pattern of being inconsistently available to students during office hours; failure to construct course syllabi which conform to the expectations of instruction at UMW, **failure to turn in final grades and mid-semester progress reports**. . . .