MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS & GRADING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

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September 29, 2017

Members Present: Katie Dyer, Blaine Roberts, Susan Geringer, Luke Pryor, Steve Chung, Doreen DeLeon

Members Absent:

Members Excused:

Meeting was called to order at 3:00p.m.

1. Consent Calendar
   1. Minutes of 4/7/17 meeting
   2. Agenda of today’s meeting
2. Communications and Announcements
   1. Dr. Dyer is serving (representing this committee) on Dennis Nef’s ad hoc committee on semester grade deadlines. It was agreed that this is a serious problem because requiring grades to be submitted earlier could lead to less rigorous final exams, but late grades are causing students to suffer. Committee members suggested:
      1. Withholding paychecks of the offending faculty members
      2. Placing rebukes in personnel files
      3. Involving department chairs in the process of getting delinquent faculty to turn in grades on time
      4. Employing some sort of reward or acknowledgement for compliance
3. Old Business
   1. APM 339 – Policy on Final Exams
      * 1. See minutes of April 7 meeting for a review of the request from student council, and the considerations raised by the committee at that meeting.
        2. Dr. Dyer reported that:
           1. Dr. Fu had OIE explore how many students had three or more final exams on one day based on the classes they are enrolled in. Approximately 2,000 students had schedules that would make it possible. The true number is undoubtedly less, as some of these “classes” are labs, or one-unit activity classes, or classes that require a final paper instead of an exam, etc. But 2,000 is the highest possible number.
           2. Dr. Dyer met with Bernadette Muscat, director of the test center. The Bulldog Test Center (formerly, the Academic Test Center) has as its mission to help with make-up exams. Therefore, this falls squarely within its mission. Dr. Muscat estimated that the center could potentially serve about 2,000 students during finals week. Therefore, the Test Center could potentially be used to meet demand if we institute a policy whereby students are allowed to reschedule finals if they have three or more in a day.
           3. Four CSU campuses (San Jose, Pomona, San Luis Obispo, & Bakersfield) have policies to accommodate students who have three or more final exams in one day. Committee members have identified three other universities with policies about this (Mizzou, U of Oklahoma, North Texas U). All seven of these policies are attached.
        3. Additional Issues:
           1. Cheating: early or late exams increase the risk of cheating. This is more likely in some classes than others. This is a concern that instructors consider when deciding whether or not to allow early or late exams. Forcing instructors to allow changes would remove this discretion.
           2. Entitlement: Committee members are concerned about creating a circumstance whereby students are “in the driver’s seat”…where they have the right to demand accommodations and faculty are obligated to comply, regardless of the pedagogical and other reasons for refusing. Committee members reject the argument that faculty are obligated to make school easier for students. They would feel more compelled to meet this request if there was any evidence that this was a) common, and b) interfered with learning.
           3. Senate: Committee members think it is unlikely that the Academic Senate will support a policy that gives students the right to demand that faculty make adjustments to the semester calendar in this way.
           4. Academic Freedom: Some committee members feel strongly that it would be wrong to compel a faculty member to accommodate a request like this. The schedule is out before the semester starts, so the final exam schedule is not a secret and students have all semester to prepare for it. In real life, deadlines sometimes pile up and cannot simply be rearranged when the lowest status employee finds it inconvenient. Some final exams cannot easily be rescheduled (final group presentations, video analysis essays, etc.). For all of these reasons and others, faculty should be able to decide if rearrangement can be allowed or not.
           5. Transparency: Right now, there is no transparency about this process. There is no policy one way or the other. Instructions on the final exam schedule are interpreted differently by members of the committee, so they are obviously not clear about whether students even have the right to ask for accommodations. No guidance is given to faculty to help them decide whether or not to comply.
        4. Decision
           1. The committee believes that Fresno State should have a written formal policy about final exams so that each party (student, instructor) knows where they stand and what their role is.
           2. Students should know that they can ask for accommodation, but faculty should not be obligated to provide accommodations. Requests should:

Be made no later than three weeks before the last day of class. Students should be looking ahead to their final exam schedule. If they can’t plan ahead, then faculty should not be put on the spot to help them resolve problems that they have not planned for.

Include documentation that they do, in fact, have three or more final exams that day, not just that they could potentially. They should provide copies of the syllabi for each class to show that the instructors are, in fact, offering an exam. It is NOT enough that a paper is due that day, or that a potluck will be held that day.

* + - 1. Action Plan
         1. Dr. Dyer will draft suggested changes to APM 339 to reflect this position.
         2. It will be circulated by email to check that we agree on the wording before she forwards it back to the chair of AP&P.

1. New Business
   1. Student Affairs policy regarding graduating with honors – Dr. Dyer
      * 1. Current Policy (<https://www.fresnostate.edu/studentaffairs/are/degree-advising/graduation.html>)

**Honors at Graduation**

Honors at the time of graduation from the university are awarded to undergraduate students based on the following criteria:

1. Students must have an overall minimum grade point average of 3.5 on all work attempted.
2. Students must have a minimum grade point average of 3.5 on all work taken at the university.
3. Students must have completed 45 units in residence at California State University, Fresno.
   * + 1. Problem
       2. Transfer students who do not have 45 units completed at the time they apply for graduation are denied being recognized for honors at graduation even though they will meet the requirement by the time of graduation.
       3. According to Dr. Fu, most college deans waive the third requirement. Students cannot graduate without meeting this requirement, so it seems redundant to have it here, and its only effect is to exclude transfer students from having their honors recognized.
       4. Unanimous agreement that this policy is unnecessary and harsh.
       5. Action Plan
          1. Dr. Dyer will propose to Academic Senate that we either eliminate point #3 above, or reword it to say that: “Students will have completed 45 units in residence at CSUF by the date of graduation.”
   1. Time limit on undergraduate units - Dr. Geringer
      * 1. Problem and Proposal
           1. Currently, Fresno State has no policy regarding how long units remain good. Therefore, students can earn 117 units and 20 years later, return for the final 3 unit class, and still get a degree with the current year on it, even though the information they learned may be sadly out of date.
   2. She points to a policy at San Luis Obispo that units are good for only seven years. Some departments choose to waive this limit. In some fields, this may not be important. In history, for example, it may not be important because most topics do not become useless when dated. But in other fields, computer science for example, a 2018 degree implies current knowledge and skills, and those are vastly different when they age. The SLO policy also has a provision that students can ask for an exception to be made for them under certain conditions.
      * + 1. Considerations raised by other committee members
      1. Graduate units are already subject to this sort of limitation.
      2. Students have the right to challenge courses, so there is already a mechanism for this. We are unsure exactly how this policy works.
         * 1. Action Plan
           2. Dr. Geringer will propose where in the APM this policy might go, and write up language for us to consider at our next meeting.
           3. Dr. Dyer will find SLO’s policy to review.
           4. Dr. DeLeon will find the policy on challenging courses.
4. Next meeting
   1. To be arranged via Doodle
   2. Aim for late October