

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC SENATE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE
February 21, 2022

Present: D. Aubert; L. Beale; P. Beavers; M. Kornbluh; J. Lewis; N. Rossi; B. Roth; N. Simon;
R. Villarosa; A. Wisniewski

Guests: B. Baltes; K. Dormer; Darin Ellis

1. Article XXX Committee Procedures: Although in the previous contract, Article XXX had specified that the university-wide committees that are formed according to the procedures in Article XXX of the Agreement between the University and the AAUP-AFT were to be formed in the winter term, it was actually done in the fall because of various hurdles in getting nominations completed. Senior Associate Provost Boris Baltes proposed moving the solicitation of nominees for the Article XXX committees from the fall term to the winter term. Policy supported this change and agreed that Baltes should send out the request for nominations soon. Baltes and Policy Committee members also discussed the best time for selection and notification of assignments, which could either take place in late May/early June or early August. That will depend in part on completion of the nominee process.
2. Proposed Statutory Changes for Withdrawals, Posthumous Degrees, Transfer Credits and Certificates. Associate Director for Strategic Academic Initiatives Kelly Dormer presented changes to Board of Governors statutes that are proposed for approval at the March 2 plenary session. They have been discussed with, and generally supported by, the Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty Affairs, and Student Affairs Committees.
 - a. Posthumous Degrees. The proposal includes changes to the Board of Governors Statute “Academic Recognition of Deceased or Critically Ill Students.” It would reduce the amount of work that had to be completed for awarding degrees to deceased students or critically ill students from 90% to 75% of required credits. This would apply to undergraduate and graduate students and students in the juris doctor and Doctor of Pharmacy programs. Dormer said that many universities in Michigan require students to have completed 75% of the required credits; others award the degree if students are in their fourth year. Ellis added that requirements vary greatly among universities, and many Michigan institutions have no published policies. The university receives two to four requests for posthumous degrees per year. Someone could petition for a posthumous degree with less than 75% of completed credits.
 - b. Withdrawals. Current withdrawal grades include WP (withdrawal with a passing grade earned to date), WF (withdrawal with a failing grade earned to date), and WN (withdrawal with no basis for a letter grade, non-attendance and require instructor approval. It is proposed to establish W (withdrawal) grade and to eliminate the requirement for instructor approval. There are various equity issues in the current system. Students of color receive WFs at higher rates. Graduate schools tend to view WF as a failing grade even though the reason for that status could well be illness or other circumstances beyond a student’s control: that puts students at a disadvantage for graduate admission, particularly in the health sciences. Villarosa mentioned that some students prefer a WP rather than a W. Naida Simon said that the marks of WP, WF, and WN were initiated in 2005 because of the state’s concern about too many W and X grades and a need to determine whether students were passing at the time of their withdrawal. Simon said the faculty member could give the student a WP if they wanted.

The Faculty Affairs Committee had recommended that the change be retroactive to the winter 2020 term when classes that could be taught virtually were moved off campus. After some discussion, the Policy Committee recommended that the statutory change be retroactive for all currently enrolled students. Noreen Rossi asked whether the retroactive change would apply to a graduate who returned to get a second degree. The record of the first degree would not be changed since transcripts, once finalized, cannot be revised. A new transcript covers the new degree enrollment.

- c. Undergraduate Certificates. The current Board of Governors statute 2.43.12 outlines Guidelines for Undergraduate Certificate Programs. These guidelines state that to enroll in a certificate program students must have either completed at least 60 credits with a grade point average of 2.0 or above or have previously completed a baccalaureate degree. Section 2.43.12.050 notes that undergraduate certificate programs require at least 15 credits of advanced coursework: no transfer credit applies to a certificate. Courses for certificates must be at the 3000-6000 level. Students who have completed an undergraduate degree may apply 9 previously earned credits towards a certificate. Currently undergraduate certificates are awarded upon completion of the bachelor's program.

The proposed changes would allow students to apply transfer credits for up to half of the credits required for a certificate. The minimum number of credits for a certificate would be reduced from 15 to 12 credits, though programs could require more. Removing the 3000-6000 level requirement allows academic programs to determine the appropriate courses to include in the certificate program: some may include entry-level material and others may opt for only advanced certificates. The change would also allow a program to award the certificate at the time the credits are completed, rather than waiting until graduation. Some of our peer institutions have similar certificate requirements.

- d. Transfer Credits. Dormer explained that the proposal to revise statute 2.34.04 would change the number of credits that students from non-baccalaureate degree institutions (e.g., community colleges and/or technical/vocational institutes) can transfer to Wayne State. The current rules allow students to transfer all academic credits from institutions that grant baccalaureate degrees; but students from non-baccalaureate degree-granting institutions are limited in the number of credits they can transfer, unless they have a waiver. Non-baccalaureate students can currently transfer a maximum of 64 academic credits and a maximum of 12 credits of technical, vocational, or applied credit for cognate courses to the student's intended program. Ellis noted that Wayne State has more than 60 articulation agreements, and some of those have waived the credit limit, allowing students to transfer up to 82 credits. Revising the policy to accept all academic credit would reduce administrative burdens in articulating transfer credit and create equal opportunities for all transfer students to bring their earned credits to WSU. All degree requirements, 30 residency requirements and university-wide requirements still must be satisfied.

Beale noted that it would be helpful to have more data for these discussions. It is good to make processes more efficient and easier for students to manage, but we need to remember why universities have had requirements that students take substantial classes at the university. Some faculty will be concerned that the core of what constitutes a university liberal arts education may be lost if we reduce the number of credits required from Wayne State to no more than 30 in many cases. Roth added that while some of the courses at community colleges may be taught by the same adjuncts that teach those courses at the university, it is not just the courses that matter, but the fact that those courses are taken in a university setting with university-admitted students. (A large majority of community college students never go on to pursue a bachelor's degree.) Notwithstanding that concern, Roth opined that the proposed changes were for the best, all things considered.

Lewis said that many things seem to happen here sporadically and randomly. The Curriculum and Instruction Committee members wondered how the university could collect information more

systematically. We need to let people know that our students have a great experience here. Ellis replied that the office hopes to provide better information, in part by using the new survey being piloted this winter. The process by which students can raise concerns and complaints has also been improved

3. Report from the Chair.

a. Vaccines and Masks. Provost Kornbluh updated the committee on the plans for lifting restrictions as a result of the pandemic. The positivity rate in southeast Michigan is about 2.5% and the rate on campus is also good. Under current rules the Campus Health Committee has to approve meetings of as few as three people. The Health Committee recommended that the university move to pre-Thanksgiving rules where permission to meet is necessary for meetings of 50 or more people. If the positivity rate continues low, the cabinet is considering a “local mask option” beginning April 1 whereby people would not have to wear a mask in public areas but faculty could require that they be worn in their classrooms and staff would be allowed to require people to wear masks in their offices. The university has a large supply of K95 masks for faculty who want them for students and for staff who want them for visitors to their offices. Additionally, our current rules require anyone who visits or works on campus to be vaccinated, which has prevented us from hosting K-12 and community events on campus for two years. The plan is to discontinue the vaccination requirement for visitors to campus on April 1.

Simon asked about restrictions for student orientation. Kornbluh said the students would not have to be vaccinated until the day classes start but we would have vaccination at every orientation and students would be encouraged to get vaccinated. Lewis suggested the campus provide outdoor tents for summer classes, which would improve students’ mental health. Kornbluh will look into the possibility. All faculty, staff, and students will have to be vaccinated for the fall term, with the same waiver system (religious waivers for faculty and staff; consistent opposition to vaccines for students). Fewer than 15% of students have waivers and even a lower percentage of faculty and staff.

b. Fall Classes. The Provost and deans have discussed a goal of holding about 80% of undergraduate fall classes in person. There are no mandates that everyone has to teach an in-person class: as before, faculty work with the department chair to determine what is pedagogically appropriate to teach online. The Provost would like departments to offer enough general education courses so that a student could complete most coursework online and courses for majors if the department considers that appropriate.

4. Report from Senate President.

a. Graduate Degree Time Limitations. The Graduate Council is considering whether the university should extend the completion deadline for graduate degrees, which can present problems for funding. If the department doesn’t have sufficient financial support, granting an extension means that faculty cannot recruit new students because the funding is needed to support the students granted an extension.

5. Promotion of Teaching Faculty: A 2N committee of administrators and faculty is addressing promotion of teaching faculty. Kornbluh would like, as much as possible, to mirror the promotion of tenure-track faculty. The promotion should be approved at the department level, the college level, and the university level. The question is would the committee that handles promotion and tenure for tenure-track faculty be the committee that reviews the promotion of teaching faculty. The Policy Committee gave its full support to having a university-wide committee review and vote on the teaching faculty promotion decisions. Kornbluh said the university also needs to look at the promotion of clinical faculty. There is a substantial number of clinical faculty in the medical school that have never been promoted but who should be promoted. Policy members agreed that this has been a historical trend here that needs to be reversed.

6. Code of Business Ethics. Policy members received a copy of additional edits proposed by a subgroup that had reviewed the administrative drafts after the General Counsel comments. Because the Provost and Chief Business Officer co-chair the Administrative Policies and Procedures Committee, the Policy edits have been accepted with a note regarding the objections of General Counsel.
7. Pandemic-Related Tenure Clock Extensions. Provost Kornbluh is willing to extend the tenure clock for anyone who requests that it be done, whether for personal reasons such as childcare or professional reasons. He has met with the deans and with assistant professors. The question is whether faculty should be required to apply for an extension or whether the clock should be automatically extended with faculty who do not want to utilize the extension able to go forward at the regular time. Kornbluh wants to do this in a way that supports the faculty as much as possible. Villarosa asked that extensions be considered as well for academic staff ESS decisions. Provost Kornbluh left the meeting to attend to other university business. Policy members discussed the benefits and pitfalls of the options and concluded that an automatic extension should be provided, with faculty of course able to go up earlier if desired.
8. Data Breach Policy. Policy Committee reviewed the draft of a proposed data breach policy and discussed what should be clarified or modified. Beale will send a response to Vice President Massaron about the concerns with the reporting provision and ask for a copy of the federal or state statute that has spurred the need for a new policy.
9. Proceedings of the September 24 Policy Committee Meeting. The proceedings were approved as submitted.
10. Plenary Agenda for March 2. The committee reviewed the drafted agenda and revised it.

Approved as amended at the February 28, 2022 Policy Committee meeting