

ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE

December 11, 2020

Zoom Meeting from 1-2 p.m.

Members Present: Keith Goyne (Chair), Cassandra Garcia, Robin Panneton, Kimberly Smith, Susan Sumner, Keith Thompson

Recorder: Arlice Banks, *Executive Administrative Assistant, College of Natural Resources and Environment*

Keith Goyne, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

New Business:

I. Draft Academic Relief Policy—1.0 Purpose

- A. The word “withdrawal” will be replaced with “resignation.”
- B. Compassionate Relief is for an entire semester. The CR policy is written to bestow compassion for students who need it.

II. Draft Academic Relief Policy—2.0 Policy

- A. Every CR submission should be carefully considered regardless of the number of times a student submits a request. Remove the last sentence from the first paragraph.
- B. Remove the “CRW” notation for compassionate relief withdrawal and replace it with a notation deemed appropriate by the University Registrar.
- C. Restricting CR retroactively to the current semester may be too strict; however, going beyond one year could challenge credibility. Allowing the evaluating committee to extend the time frame for CR submissions covers extenuating circumstances.
- D. Kimberly Smith will provide some language for the committee’s consideration regarding encouraging students to file for CR by the earliest possible date.
- E. The language regarding administrative holds is biased toward medical situations. The evaluating committee will encounter situations that don’t fit a medical category.
- F. Use a medical hold when warranted. If a student breaks their leg and can’t complete their fieldwork, then documentation from a healthcare provider isn’t required, and a medical hold isn’t necessary.

- G. Reworded the last paragraph to indicate that an administrative hold, regardless of the reason, will be released by the Registrar's Office after documentation has been provided. Including this wording eliminates different procedures based on the type of request. Having the "hold" would allow associate deans and advisors to track their students and help them regain entry back into Virginia Tech.
- H. Some students with financial issues have previously requested AR; however, their financial situation had not changed when they re-enrolled. What controls do we put in place to intervene in this situation?
- I. All students granted CR should provide a self-assessment of why they think they are ready to return to Virginia Tech before they are re-enrolled.
- J. Students suffering from mental health challenges may not be able to provide a self-assessment on whether they are ready to return to Virginia Tech. Do we need a healthcare provider to make that determination?
- K. If the student's CR request is medical, a healthcare provider should provide that documentation. Having students without a medical CR go through a self-assessment forces them to think about what will change before they re-enroll.
- L. Many students don't seek medical or mental help because of the costs. Are we creating an obstacle for students struggling financially by requiring documentation?
- M. Students do not have access to the Cook Counseling Center or Schiffert Health Center when they are not enrolled. A student may not have insurance to pay for an office visit to obtain documentation.
- N. Students who live in rural areas may have to travel some distance to see a healthcare provider, which can be prohibitive because of transportation issues and financial concerns.
- O. Instead of asking the student to provide documentation, any student who returns to campus must follow the university's readmission process. The individuals involved in that process will obtain documentation, if necessary, and evaluate the student's readiness to re-enroll.
- P. The academic associate dean is the entryway back into enrollment. If necessary, it would be up to the associate dean to request documentation from a healthcare provider declaring that the student can return to their studies.

III. Draft Academic Relief Policy—3.0 Procedures

- A. **Scenario 1:** The student initiates the request with the academic associate dean. The associate dean and the student decide on the campus entity (Cook Counseling Center, Services for Students with Disabilities, etc.) that should receive the request. The student contacts the Office of University Scholarships and Financial Aid to determine if there are any financial impacts of taking CR. The request is forwarded to the appropriate campus entity and evaluated by that entity's internal committee. Once that internal committee makes a recommendation on the student's request, they forward recommendation to the University Compassionate Relief Committee for a decision. The CR Committee contacts the associate dean to enter Banner's action. The process begins and ends with the associate dean.
1. The Provost's office should staff this process and communicate the committee's decisions to the Registrar.
 2. Compassionate Relief requests should automatically be routed to the Financial Aid office for review.
- B. **Scenario 2:** The student initiates the request with the academic associate dean. The associate dean and the student decide on the campus entity (Cook Counseling Center, Services for Students with Disabilities, etc.) that reviews the request. Once the campus entity approves or denies the request, it is routed to the university-level Academic Relief Committee. The university-level committee comprises one representative from CUSP, one academic associate dean, one representative from the faculty senate, and one representative from each campus entity serving as ex officio members. Once this committee makes the final decision, the Provost's staff member informs the student, academic associate dean, and the Registrar's office of the outcome. The Registrar's office makes the appropriate changes into Banner.
- C. **Scenario 3:** A third scenario was also submitted that was similar to Scenario 1. It was acknowledged but not discussed in depth to avoid redundancy.
- D. Additional discussion about procedures
1. An advisor will probably begin the process by making recommendations and informing the student about the CR process.
 2. If the student is in the same college as the associate dean serving on the university-level Academic Relief Committee, the associate dean should recuse themselves from the process, which avoids the problem of an individual voting twice.
 3. Does an associate dean's support or lack of support for the student's CR request bias the university-level Academic Relief Committee? The associate dean might have an opinion but shouldn't indicate that on the CR request. A committee with the expertise to handle a variety of situations should make the decision.

4. A representative from each campus entity on the university-level Academic Relief Committee would provide some oversight. Each committee member can provide input, keeping the discussion within parameters and deter bias.
5. The university-level Academic Relief Committee should comprise all the associate deans and representatives from each campus entity so that the committee can learn from each other and hear everyone's thought processes. The process would start with one associate dean but ends with all of the associate deans.
6. Dr. Goyne will try to blend the three proposed procedures and present a revised plan for consideration at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m.