

ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE
February 19, 2021
Zoom Meeting from 1-2 p.m.

Members Present: Keith Goyne (Chair), Cassandra Garcia, Robin Panneton, Keith Thompson

Members Absent: Susan Sumner, Kimberly Smith

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

Keith Goyne, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

I. Review and Vote Upon

- A. The January 22 meeting minutes were approved without modification.
- B. The February 5 meeting minutes were approved without modification.

II. The February 19 agenda was approved without modification.

III. Old Business

- A. Mid-term grades—Update from Kimberly Smith or Lauren Thomas on literature informing mid-term grade reporting as a best practice.
 - 1. Kimberly Smith was not present at today’s meeting to discuss mid-term grade reporting as a best practice.

- B. Review Edits to Draft Academic Policy: Section 3.0—Procedures.
 - 1. 3.1 Relief Request Form and Submission of Request
 - a) At a minimum, what else should be added to this section at the university level?
 - b) Students may have ancillary materials, such as a letter from a physician or a therapist’s note. How will supporting documentation be handled?
 - c) The campus entities may wish to collect the support documentation. We need to be sensitive to HIPAA and FERPA requirements.
 - d) Links to each campus entity’s confidentially policies (if they have one) are included in the electronic form created by Keith Thompson. Keith has designed a form using Microsoft Forms, using built-in “logic” that allows documents to be routed to a specific campus entity without going to an associate dean.

- e) Students should be informed about their rights and how their information will be shared to make an informed decision before uploading supporting documentation.
- f) Campus entities should not be able to modify the electronic form once it is implemented. However, they should have the opportunity to request additional information beyond what is present on the form.
- g) Creating an electronic form and drafting the policy simultaneously allows for revisions to be made to the form and the process flow as issues and concerns are brought forth.
- h) Leaving it up to the campus entities to decide what ancillary materials are needed opens the door for inequality. If we require specific materials, each unit will have to require some documentation from the student to be equitable.
- i) Suppose a student has mental health issues and is seeing a provider. The student can provide a letter from the provider with a diagnosis along with a recommendation. Suppose another student is stalked and traumatized. What does that student present for documentation? If we want to capture all the potentialities for Compassionate Relief (CR), we can't create a definitive list for documentation without running into too many nuances.
- j) Logic branching that is built into the electronic form. If a student selects Cook Counseling Center to review their CR request, the student would be presented with different questions and information than if the student selected Schiffert Health Center.
- k) The wording of No. 6 under Section 3.1 was changed to, "Brief explanation for the request and opportunity to submit any supporting materials required by the unit to which the request is being forwarded."

2. 3.2 Comment, Review, and Approval Process

- a) The referral campus entity makes a recommendation to the CR Committee regarding the student's re-enrollment. This sentence implies that the CR Committee could overturn the suggestion from the referral office. The sentence was reworded to clarify that the CR Committee has the final vote to approve or deny the student's request.
- b) The student notification process for requests filed within one year and filed later than one year are the same except for Step 2. The CR Committee shall review and decide to accept or deny requests filed more than one year later, taking that responsibility out of the academic dean's hands to decide if a case goes forward.

3. 3.3 Removal of Holds Associated with Compassionate Relief
 - a) Let's imagine that the academic dean thinks that the student could continue their academic studies, but Cook Counseling Center doesn't think so. Who has the final authority?
 - b) The academic dean may request that the student's specific support office review the self-assessment form and ancillary documentation before deciding if a student is prepared to resume their academic studies. Therefore, the academic dean makes the final decision, and isn't required to contact to the campus entity that made the recommendation if they don't feel that they need to.
 - c) This workflow could be worked into an electronic form. The student indicates that they are requesting readmission after CR. They indicate the office that handled their initial request. That request goes to that unit first for a recommendation statement and is then forwarded to the academic dean for a decision.
 - d) The student receives a copy of the campus entity's recommendation simultaneously when the associate dean receives the recommendation. Therefore, the student might think that their request has been granted; however, the academic dean can deny it. Campus entities have been asked to stop copying students because it is up to the academic dean to make the final decision, and the student needs to wait to hear something once that decision is made.
 - e) Some colleges have been reluctant to go against a campus entity's recommendation, especially from the Cook Counseling Center, while other colleges routinely challenged unit recommendations. This disparity makes it unclear what role the associate deans play in these situations.
 - f) Section 3.3, steps 1 and 2 under the procedures to remove academic holds on student accounts were reworded for clarity
4. Discussion about the draft electronic form
 - a) Keith Thompson used Microsoft Forms to create a draft electronic form. Everyone at Virginia Tech should have Microsoft Office 365 and can assess the electronic form as long as they are logged in. Click on the link to access the draft form:
<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=hGiVYK0Q-kCGPU8yweOjejQRGbbz0dJMgklqap8UmyhUMkFVNVgyU1IZRkpTNTRGWINSOVVTWTawRi4u>
 - b) The form is intended for authenticated users, so you must have a Virginia Tech email account and log in with your Virginia Tech username and password. If the sharing is set to authentication, the student's name and email address will automatically populate .

- c) The student enters their 9-digit student ID and contact information and then selects the college for their primary major. Once the primary major is selected, this populates a field in a spreadsheet behind the scenes that links to a database of academic deans to determine the appropriate person to receive the form.
- d) If the student indicates that they are an international student, Cranwell International Center will be contacted for input on the CR request's impact on the student's visa status.
- e) Question 6 asks if the student is seeking a partial withdrawal from the indicated semester. While the CR policy is written with the expectation that a student is withdrawing from all classes that semester, there may be extenuating circumstances that would permit a student to seek a partial withdrawal.
- f) The student selects the campus entity that would review their CR request. If the student selects the Cook Counseling Center, there will be some specific questions to Cook; however, each unit has a consistent structure. Some questions do appear for each unit.
- g) There is an option to upload files to a SharePoint site.
- h) The last section of the is the Acknowledgements and Submission page. At least one acknowledgement must be checked in order to submit the request.
- i) Keith Thompson will make a some revisions to the electronic form and have a second version ready for review at the next meeting.
- j) The goal is to send out the draft CR policy along with a link to the electronic form to the campus entities, after the March 5 meeting of the Academic Policies Committee, to solicit feedback.

IV. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:04 p.m.