

ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE

December 8, 2021

Zoom Meeting from 2-3 p.m.

Members Present: Cassandra Garcia, Keith Goyne (Chair), Susan Sumner, Keith Thompson

Members Absent: Robin Panneton (on research leave), Kimberly Smith

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

Keith Goyne (Chair) called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

I. Review and vote upon

- A. The November 10, 2021 meeting minutes were approved without modification.

II. Review and approve agenda

- A. The December 8, 2021 agenda was approved without modification.

III. Notifications

- A. Vice Provost Holloway, the University Registrar, and the Associate Deans for Undergraduate Academics have asked the committee to evaluate VT Policy 6370—Resignation of Students.

IV. Old Business

- A. Discuss other edits to the draft Academic Relief (AR) policy based on comments and concerns expressed at our last meeting and via email (see October 27 full meeting minutes and a packet of email comments).
 1. Section 1 Purpose. The sentence beginning with “Compassionate relief is not an accommodation for a person with a disability. . .” and ending with “Title IX Sexual Harassment and Responsible Employee Reporting (Policy 1026).” was moved to Section 2.0 Policy, as the last paragraph.
 2. Section 2 Policy. The last paragraph beginning with “Nothing in this policy limits a student’s ability to request an accommodation through Services for Students with Disabilities . . .” was moved to Section 1.0 Purpose as the last paragraph. The last sentence of that paragraph was slightly modified to read, “Furthermore, the policy contains protections that limit the sharing of a student’s medical, disability, and other private information in accordance with federal and state laws, and university policy and procedures associated with privacy.”
 3. All instances of “ex officio members” were replaced with “ad hoc members.” This change was made to reflect that ad hoc members would attend the Compassionate Relief Committee (CRC) meetings only if it is a case that involves their office.

4. Section 2.0 Policy, third paragraph. Individuals from the Office of Equity and Accessibility (OEA) suggested that the following paragraph be removed from the policy, “It is expected that the norm for compassionate relief will be a consideration for a complete resignation from all courses in a particular semester. All applications for compassionate relief require detailed and credible supporting documentation. Compassionate relief requests for withdrawing from selective courses require the inclusion of more detailed documentation justifying the selective nature of the request (i.e., how the event negatively impacted performance in one course versus another).” The committee decided not to remove the entire paragraph but to reword the following sentence, “All applications for compassionate relief require detailed and credible supporting documentation and consultation with the campus entity through whom the student is seeking support, as deemed appropriate by the supporting campus entity.”
5. Section 2.0 Policy, last sentence of the third paragraph. The last sentence of the third paragraph was reworded to read, “Private and sensitive information that may be submitted as part of the application process will only be viewed by representatives of the campus entity through whom the student is seeking support, and not by the Compassionate Relief Committee (see Section 3.1 for additional information).” This modification was made to address concerns from OEA that the CRC was too large.
6. Section 3.2 Comment, Review and Approval Process, Step 1. To address concerns that students are told that associate deans make the final decision regarding AR; however, they typically endorse the campus entities’ recommendation, Step 1 was modified to add “e-signature” at the end of the sentence. Having an electronic system would allow the associate deans to send an email to the student.
7. Section 3.2 Comment, Review and Approval Process, Step 4. The last sentence was reworded to read, “The electronic system developed for the compassionate relief process shall automatically inform a student if their request is supported by the campus entity and forwarded to the CRC or not recommended to the committee (i.e., the request was denied).” This change will keep the student informed as their request moves through the electronic system.
8. Section 3.2 Comment, Review and Approval Process, Step 5. There were questions about what materials the CRC would review. The first sentence of Step 5 was modified to read, “The Compassionate Relief Committee will review the campus entity’s recommendation and associated materials, ***excluding*** medical, disability, and other private information . . .”. It was suggested that “excluding” be written in italics, bolded, and underlined for emphasis.
9. Section 3.4, Removal of Holds Associated with Compassionate Relief, Step. 1. The words “Office for Equity and Accessibility/Title IX Coordinator” were added to the list of campus entities.

V. New Business

- A. Comment on: Section 3.2, Comment, Review and Approval Process, Steps 1-3. Individual suggested reordering the first three steps as follows: 1) Office of University Scholarships and Financial Aid, 2) Cranwell International Center, and then (3) college comments from the academic associate dean.
1. We can make this a parallel process where the request is going to all three entities simultaneously. It depends upon what each group needs to see. So, if Cranwell or Financial Aid are putting in relevant information, the associate dean probably doesn't need to reiterate that at all to the CRC at the end.
 2. Keith Goyne will reword that section to reflect that these processes will work in parallel within the electronic system.
- B. Comment from individual: Section 3.2, Comment, Review and Approval Process, Steps 6 and 7. The current version has the student being notified before the Office of the University Registrar takes action on the accounts/records of students granted relief. The student should not be notified of the Compassionate Relief Committee's (CRC) decision until after the Office of the University Registrar has taken action on the accounts and records of the student granted relief.
1. The committee agreed to switch Steps 6 and 7.
- C. Comment from individual: Section 3.2, Comment, Review and Approval Process, Step 4. "The campus entity determined most appropriate for reviewing a request shall gather additional information from the student and meet with them as needed, review the student's case, and make a written assessment that includes a recommendation on the student's request to the Compassionate Relief Committee." What do you want in the written assessment besides a recommendation?
1. The word "assessment" will be removed from the policy, so the sentence would read "The campus entity determined most appropriate for reviewing a request shall gather additional information from the student and meet with them as needed, review the student's case, and make a recommendation on the student's request to the Compassionate Relief Committee."
- D. Comment from individual: Regarding international students, there are only two offices where students can get immigration relief, Cook Counseling Center and Schiffert Health Center. So, I don't know if there is a way to indicate in the policy that international students, as part of this process, need to be aware that relief through some of the other offices may not meet immigration requirements.
1. No additional language will be added to the policy for the student at this time.

- E. Individual: I still have some concerns about calling this policy Compassionate Relief. Students could interpret that if they are not granted a request, the university is not compassionate. I like the idea of calling the policy Academic Relief, which is not such a loaded term.
 - 1. Some alternative name suggestions mentioned were Revision of Records, Academic Assistance, and Academic Aid.
 - 2. These suggestions will be discussed at the next meeting.

- F. Email Comments from individual
 - 1. The committee suggests that we leave these comments to Legal Counsel to review.
 - 2. Keith Goyne will try to get the draft to Legal Counsel before winter break.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:41 p.m.