ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE
March 16, 2022
Zoom Meeting from 2-3 p.m.

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

Guest Present: Rick Sparks, University Registrar

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

Keith Goyne (Chair) called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

I. **Review and vote upon**
    A. The February 16, 2022 meeting minutes were approved without modification.
    B. The March 16, 2022 agenda was approved without modification.

II. **Old Business**
    A. Academic Relief (AR) Policy
        1. The Academic Relief Policy entered governance on Monday, and the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) was the first reading. In a month, the policy will go through the second reading.
        2. Discussion items about AR Policy with contributions from Rick Sparks

    B. What data or information do we need to move forward, if any, on evaluating PPM 196?
        1. Committee information regarding peer institutes
            a) Keith Goyne researched and found that, much like AR, institutes handle their W grade policy differently. For example, if a student uses a W at many institutes, it is for all classes in a semester, not for a single class you can drop. Some classes have restrictions on the number of credits, while others have no restrictions on the number of withdrawals for classes or credits.

C. Discussion about potential changes to PPM 196 (discussion ideas captured below represent free-flowing brainstorming of the committee)

1. Technology and other questions from the committee (APC) for Rick Sparks (RS) related to any policy revisions

    a) APC: Will allowing students to use a W grade after the final grade present a technological challenge?

    b) RS: It does present some technical challenges because it will change the academic history at that point, but the committee would not say that the university can't overcome this problem.

    c) APC: We discussed the possibility that a student could indicate their intention to use a W grade in the middle of a semester but not finalize that intention until after the semester and when they see their final grades. Is that a possibility?

    d) RS: The web app can collect anything but the question is where we put it and how we unearth it, which depends on who needs to know the student's intent to use a W, etc.

    e) APC: We discussed if restricting the use of Ws to C- or less is something that could be automated. In other words, if a student gets a C, they would not be able to use a W. Is that a technological challenge?

    f) RS: The automation can be worked in because the information is stored, so the system would know what grade the student earned and whether or not the use of a W qualifies in that particular case.

    g) APC: We've had discussions around the idea that students would have perhaps two Ws for use in 1000-2000 level courses and two Ws for use in 3000-4000 level courses. Could the Ws be coded so that it would identify a student and not allow them to use more than two Ws for those different grade levels?

    h) RS: The Ws could be coded as long as the only entry point is the web app students are using because that is where all of the logic is "baked in."

    i) Member commented that perhaps the committee could discuss using the W/P and W/F and how that would fit in with a student's GPA.

2. Discussion about the use of Ws after final grades
   a) The committee is interested in researching the idea of allowing students to use W grades after posting final grades.
   b) The committee talked about whether students should be restricted to using Ws <u>only</u> after the final grades are posted. One point raised was that students might want to use a W in the middle of the semester to focus on their other classes, while another member commented that they want to encourage students to continue in that class to learn as much as they can.
   c) After much discussion, the committee agreed to examine restricting the use of Ws until after the final grades are posted. Under this scenario there will be no mid-semester use of a W and the last day of classes would be when the window opens for students to use a W.
   d) What about restricting the use of Ws to specific grades?
      i. If a student has earned a decent grade, the committee wants them to move on.
      ii. The committees believe there are some courses where the minimum grade is a B- or better—a C is a failing grade.
      iii. The committee wonders if the web form can establish a minimum grade tied to the course if the student wants to drop so that the default could be C- but there could be special exceptions for specific majors.
      iv. Keith Goyne will ask Rick Sparks if it would be technologically possible to use a C- or less as the norm, but then for specific majors that might require a B- or better, exceptions could be built into that workflow process.

3. Discussion about the number of Ws afforded to students and the division of Ws for use in 1000-2000 and 3000-4000 level courses

   a) The committee thinks part of the suggestion for the four Ws, but restricted to course level, could be a weak way to enforce thoughtful use of the Ws. Maybe the university can do that by educating the students, so we don't necessarily have to give them more Ws.. Currently a student can use all three Ws in one semester, so options that impose a limit of one or two should be examined.

   b) The committee need to consider transfer students who bring in a lot of credits and go past that freshman category pretty quick because of their credit accumulation.

   c) Question was raised if the committee was talking about two within the first two years, no matter what those are categorized as, or is it two within 60 credits at Virginia Tech, or is it tied explicitly to first-year, second-year student standing rank?

   d) Question was raised if a student could use two Ws within 60 credit hours and two Ws within 60 and 120 (some majors go beyond that)? Would this disadvantage those students to a great extent?

   e) Committee discussed another option of allowing each student four Ws, but they can't use more than two in any semester.

   f) The committee will continue this discussion at the next meeting.

III. Adjourn
The meeting was adjourned at 2:56 p.m.