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ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE

December 9, 2011
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Champ Hall Conference Room

Minutes

Call to Order - Richard Mueller

Approval of Minutes

Business

Awarding an Associate's Degree after a Bachelor's Degree – PENDING Updates

It was determined that several universities require a 15-credit minimum for an associate's degree after a bachelor's degree and they require that it be in a different area. Students should not be allowed to return and get an AS or AA in the same field of study as their bachelor's degree. We discussed allowing an applied associate in a different area of study. We don't anticipate many students wanting to do this; however, a policy needs to be in place to cover those who do. John Mortensen will come back to the committee with policy recommendations.

Earned F Grade – PENDING Updates

Steve Sharp attended the meeting to discuss the issue with earned F's and how this and other issues impact financial aid. (See below) This becomes a compliance issue and could put the university in a situation where they could be fined as much as \$250K. Obviously, this is not only a financial aid problem, but a faculty and compliance issue as well. The faculty needs to become more aware of the issue so that they can monitor the student's attendance/participation. Mr. Sharp is pursuing using the capabilities of Canvas to document attendance, participation/non participation. It was suggested that we add the following new designation to the grading options: NF – Non Participation F, to help identify students getting an F with no documented participation. Mueller will discuss this with the EPC in January. If this moves to EPC a policy change will need to be drafted. The earliest effective date for any of this would be summer.

The committee encouraged Steve Sharp to continue to work with Michelle Larson to devise a plan to educate the faculty on the importance and benefits of documenting student participation in their classes.

Meeting adjourned at: 5:00 pm.

Next Meeting

Friday, January 13, 2011 Champ Hall Conference Room; 4:00 pm

Documenting Attendance/Participation for Aid Recipients

Objectives:

- 1) minimize the intrusion and inconvenience of federal regulations that require us to document attendance for aid recipients and
- 2) minimize loss of funds

Two Requirements:

- Document eligibility for Pell grants– Schools “must have a procedure in place to know whether a student (receiving a Pell grant) has begun attendance in all classes.”
- Document last date of attendance (LDA) when student has 0.0 GPA for term for Return to Title IV regulations

Scope of Liability:

- Colorado university assessed \$250,000 fine
- Maximum potential liability last fall semester \$940,000
- With current practice, estimate we will return \$400,000/semester and fail to collect \$80,000 of that from students (currently collect 55% of owed funds within a semester, 75% within a year, 80% within two years, then write off)

Current Practice:

- Started this semester to ask for proof of attendance/participation when a student drops class
- Recalculate Pell until third-week census date
- Contact professors, students with 0.0 GPA for term for LDA
- Have started to contact all students/professors with any Ws or Fs
(over 1200 students/semester)

Possible policies:

- Delayed disbursement to collect professor signatures – not viable
- “Earned” Fs (U of U policy)
- Modify Banner to require LDA when entering Fs (grading in Blackboard currently a problem)
- Develop report to query Bb, Canvas for online participation
- Encourage use of Canvas/Blackboard, iClickers, syllabus quiz in first week

2010-11 Federal Student Aid Handbook, Vol. 3, Ch. 3:

Student doesn't begin attendance in all classes within a term (recalculation required)

If the student doesn't begin attendance in *all* of his or her classes, resulting in a change in the student's enrollment status, you must recalculate the student's award based on the lower enrollment status. A student is considered to have begun attendance in all of his or her classes if the student attends at least one day of class for each course in which that student's enrollment status was determined for Federal Pell Grant eligibility. Your school must have a procedure in place to know whether a student has begun attendance in all classes for purposes of the Federal Pell Grant Program. The Department does not dictate the method a school uses to document that a student has begun attendance. However, a student is considered not to have begun attendance in any class in which the school is unable to document that attendance.

U of U Earned F Policy:

3. Non-Attendance and Non-Performance

1. The grade of "EU"(Unofficial Withdrawal) is given when a student's name appears on the registrar's final grade report but there is no record of attendance or other evidence of participation in the course. The "EU" grade is treated as an "E" in calculating the student's GPA. When no grade is entered for any person listed in a final grade report, the Registrar shall record an "EU" for that person. The grade "EU" shall be treated as an "E" in calculating grade point averages, but it shall be disregarded in calculating "section mean grade."

Proposed modification of Canvas to allow reporting:

The ideal solution would allow the Financial Aid Office to enter an A# for a student and receive the last date of participation logged in the system for each of their courses that semester. Unfortunately, a student's simply logging into Blackboard or Canvas is insufficient to establish eligibility, but just about any other form of participation (discussion, emails with professors, quizzes, tests) is sufficient.

The ideal output would be something like:

<u>Name</u>	<u>A Number</u>	<u>CRN</u>	<u>Course</u>	<u>last date</u>	<u>participation type</u>
Steve Student	A00001111	12345	POLS 2200	10/4/2011	online discussion

Michelle,

Even though we got high marks in the recent program review, USU faces potentially serious financial liability from federal regulations requiring some form of attendance monitoring.

Federal policy states all schools “must have a procedure in place to know whether a student (receiving a Pell grant) has begun attendance in all classes.” Even though they will not dictate what that procedure should be, our current practices would not survive careful scrutiny. Program reviewers assessed a university in Colorado a quarter million dollar fine recently for following practices similar to ours.

Strict interpretation of that policy would mean returning Pell grants for any student dropping a class or receiving an F – unless we can document participation or attendance. (A passing grade is accepted as evidence of attendance, as well as graded quizzes, tests, participation in labs, or other academic activity.)

What we currently do:

After grades are posted, we query the system for students with a 0.0 GPA for the term. We contact the professors, asking for documentation of a last date of attendance. If we don’t get any documentation, we return all aid funds. (With a documented date, we return a prorated amount depending on when they ceased participating. If a student participates past 60% of the term, no funds are returned.) Returned funds are entered as charges on student accounts and students must repay USU before they can get a transcript or register for a subsequent term. However, some students just walk away and USU loses an average of \$ 40,000 every semester.

When a student drops a class during the first three weeks of the term, we recalculate Pell eligibility and automatically reduce awards when necessary. Again, this shows up as a charge to the student’s account.

When a student officially withdraws during the semester, we have recently started requiring documentation from professors that they started attendance or we return 100% of the aid funds.

Remaining holes:

We do not currently try to document that a student participated in for individual classes they fail or drop after third week. This could be a serious finding.

Options:

- Earned F policy

The U of U requires professors to enter a last date of attendance for any F (an “earned” F because the student did something. Without evidence of attendance or participation, a UF is entered. The Financial

Aid Office doesn't bother professors for a last date of attendance at the end of the term. However, they recalculate Pell and return funds for "unearned" Fs.

- Online documentation (syllabus quizzes)

Online participation counts. I require students who participate to take a quiz on Blackboard the first week. Professors could be encouraged to do this or have some form of online participation that can demonstrate participation without taking roll.

Program review finding: They will note a student who "fell through the cracks" because he reported to the auditors that he didn't attend. If they had determined this was a systemic problem, we could have faced severe penalties.

History: We used to require all aid recipients to submit a paper signed by their professors on the first day of class before disbursing aid. We were instructed to stop that because it was so disruptive, but we did not institute another adequate system.

Former Directors of Financial Aid have been told the university will not do anything to monitor attendance.

Professors have the option of inserting a last date of attendance in Banner when submitting grades (but does not require it – and Blackboard does not ask it – a lot of grading is done in Blackboard).

Options:

1. Status quo. Stand on principle. Risk: May face severe federal penalties.
2. Require taking of attendance at least once. Signed attendance form.
3. Adopt earned F policy. Pursue all UF grades. Have system require date of attendance for all F grades.
4. Online syllabus quiz.

U of U policy

3. Non-Attendance and Non-Performance

2. The grade of "EU"(Unofficial Withdrawal) is given when a student's name appears on the registrar's final grade report but there is no record of attendance or other evidence of participation in the course. The "EU" grade is treated as an "E" in calculating the student's GPA. When no grade is entered for any person listed in a final grade report, the Registrar shall record an "EU" for that person. The grade "EU" shall be treated as an "E" in calculating grade point averages, but it shall be disregarded in calculating "section mean grade."
3. Upon the recommendation of the course instructor and the dean of the course-offering unit (or equivalent), the Registrar may withdraw a student from a course for

nonattendance or nonperformance of assigned course work. The student shall then receive the grade of "E." Before this grade is recorded under these circumstances, the Registrar shall send written notification to the student and advise the student of the right to appeal to the dean.

<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.html#grades>

2010-11 Federal Student Aid Handbook, Vol. 3, Ch. 3:

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