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Student Academic Policies Committee Minutes of the Academic Senate 2001-09-14

University of Dayton. Student Academic Policies Committee

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SAPCAS Minutes - September 14, 2001

University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio

Minutes of Student Academic Policies Committee

September 14, 2001

9:00 – 10:10 am in KU 211

Senators Present: Bartley, Castellano, DeConinck, Doyle, Eimermacher, Ilg, Lechleiter, McKenna

Guests: Montgomery, Sandner, Schuerman, Westendorf

Issues

1. Should students who would normally finish their academic requirements during the summer semester be allowed to participate in the May graduation?

The University has decided that summer graduation will be terminated after August, 2002.

Tom Westendorf, the Registrar, informed the committee that the university has historically taken a hard line on request to “walk” during a graduation ceremony before completing the degree requirements. He knows of only one case in which an exception was granted, and it was a “life-and-death” situation. Presently, a committee of the Registrar, a SGA student, and one faculty member review requests. They work with the associate deans of the college or schools to find an acceptable solution to allow the student to graduate ASAP, but they do not make exceptions to the policy of requiring all course work completed before participating in the ceremony. Tom mentioned that the Academic Senate took a hard line on this issue several years ago, and the administration has stood by it.

Most of the discussion by the committee supported the hard line position, but there was some sympathy to allow “walking” early. It was pointed out that John Carroll University allows it under special circumstances. However, it was remarked that special circumstances are hard to define, and it could lead to an administrative nightmare, not to mention legal problems. If a student, being short 3 hours, can walk, why not walk when being short 4 hours?

It was suggested that we determine the frequency of graduation and the conditions under which students can participate in graduation ceremonies at other appropriate schools. George Doyle will look into it. It was also suggested that committee members contact their constituency to obtain further input.

2. Should Level 3 Suspensions be placed on the student's academic record?

The President's Council supports this policy and wishes to consult with the Academic Senate.

Level 1 Suspension: A violation of University disciplinary policies, but does not warrant separation from University activities. The student is on probation for a stipulated time period. However, "A violation of any University disciplinary or academic regulation by a student during the term of Level 1 Suspension results in an immediate and automatic enforcement of Level 3 Suspension."

Level 2 Suspension: A violation of University disciplinary policies resulting in separation from all University activities for a specified period of time, with the exception for attending class, meeting with faculty, or using the library or laboratories for course activities. Level 2 Suspension jumps to Level 3 Suspension for any further violations as per above.

Level 3 Suspension: A violation of University policies resulting in complete and total separation from all University activities for a specified period of time.

There is no indication in the Student Handbook as to the type of violation that would fall under each of the levels.

Bill Schuerman, dean of students, explained that only Level 3 Suspension would be noted on the academic transcript, but not the reason. While the notation is considered permanent, there does exist a process of appeal to have it removed. The word dismissal is not used because it would invite lawsuits. All suspensions have a time limit, but a Level 3 Suspension would be long enough to discourage a student from returning.

When asked why the President's Council is suggesting that the University should adopt this new policy, Bill justified the decision by stating that this university has an obligation to inform other universities and employers that the offending student engaged in activities that were judged to be highly offensive and/or dangerous to the university community. Such activities would include sexual misconduct, starting a fire, hate crimes, physical or mental abuse, etc. Since this university considers that traditional nonacademic issues, such as moral conduct, are part of its educational program, serious disciplinary actions belong on the academic transcript. The University takes the position that we are a private institution with certain values that we expect the students to abide by those values. If a student does not abide by our standards, they will be asked to leave. The price of that suspension should include a notation on the student's academic transcript. While public institutions may be more careful about disciplinary actions, due to legal problems, some do place such actions on the student's academic transcript. Bill further stated that the result of any legal action (or lack of action) by a local criminal court would not have an impact on UD's decision.

Tom Westendorf, the registrar, provided the committee with two documents. The first

contained a statement by the Family Policy Compliance Office of FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act). It stated "that an educational agency or institution 'may include information in a student's education records concerning disciplinary action taken against the student for conduct that posed a significant risk to the safety or well-being of that student, other students, or other members of the school community.'" The second statement was from the 1984 Guide, AACRAO (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers). It read that "disciplinary actions should not be part of the academic record or transcript." AACRAO goes on to say in its 1996 guidelines that "academic and disciplinary records should be keep separate." As of 1992, ten national university and student associations endorse these statements. Based on the literature there is considerable disagreement among many committees and organizations that have studied this issue.

Lisa Sandner, Legal Affairs, stated that court cases have supported the decision of universities to record disciplinary actions on the academic record. It was her opinion that the issue was not a legal problem for the University whether we adopt it or not.

A variety of points of view by the committee members indicated that the SAPC is not close to a consensus on this issue. Good arguments were made both for and against the proposed policy change.

It was suggested that we need to contact faculty and students to obtain a greater range of views. The committee members will discuss the issue with their constituency and report back. George Doyle will attempt to determine what the policy of other universities are, especially private schools and our competition.