

## Faculty Senate/All University Committee Report (2015-2016)

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| <b>Committee:</b> | Academic Affairs | <b>Prepared By:</b> | Sally Moomaw | <b>Date:</b> 2/18/16 |
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| <b>Committee Members at the Meeting:</b> | Deborah Page, Chia-chi Ho, Carol Wheeler-Strother, Stacey Hummel, Sally Moomaw |
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| <b>Topics Discussed: provide a brief description of each</b>                                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Feedback from Cabinet regarding UC Press resolution was discussed.</li> <li>2. Undergraduate Government proposed wording of Mental Health and Title IX syllabi statements was discussed.</li> <li>3. Daniel O'Connor, UG Student Government , presented information on Grade Forgiveness and Mid-semester Review that UGSG would like to see enacted</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Action Items: List item and attach supporting document if action requires such background</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Although committee members continue to support the original wording of the UC Press Resolution, because of feedback from some members of Cabinet, an amended resolution deleting references to Social Justice in the initial scope of the Press will be presented to Cabinet.</li> <li>2. AAC agrees on the importance of keeping students apprised of mental health resources and Title IX issues. The committee is prepared to recommend that faculty include this information either on their syllabi or on Blackboard. However, faculty may wish to change the suggested wording to meet the needs of their students.</li> <li>3. Please see notes on Grade Replacement and Mid-Semester Review below along with the documents submitted by student government. AAC supports both requests in general; however, the committee recommends that the decision to approve student requests for grade forgiveness be left to <b>faculty</b> rather than <b>advisors</b>, with students having the right of appeal to the program chair.</li> </ol> |

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| <b>Describe action needed on items above (discussion and input, vote, etc):</b>   | <b>By Whom:</b>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decision on revised UC Press Resolution</li> <li>2. Discussion by Cabinet on possible resolution supporting student government requests that Mental Health and Title IX information be included on syllabi or Blackboard.</li> <li>3. Discussion by Cabinet on possible resolution regarding Grade Replacement and Mid-Semester Review</li> </ol> | _By Faculty Senate<br><u>  1  2  3  </u> By Cabinet<br>___ Others (List-) |
| <b>Next Meeting: To be determined</b>   |   |

### Item 1 – RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE PROPOSED UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI PRESS

1. **WHEREAS** President Ono has charged the University of Cincinnati Press Task Force, a committee of administrators and faculty under the leadership of Dean Xuemao Wang, to explore the possible development of a University of Cincinnati press; and
2. **WHEREAS** the University press will draw further attention and heightened prestige to the University of Cincinnati as a major university contributing to scholarly communication on a global scale; and

3. **WHEREAS** becoming an active participant in scholarly publishing will further the University's Third Century goals, notably in the areas of leveraging scholarship, strategic recruiting, and fundraising; and
4. **WHEREAS** the mission of the proposed University Press to cultivate and disseminate scholarly works of the highest quality for the enhancement of the global community supports and extends the University's mission and significantly deepens its engagement with other academic institutions around the world; and
5. **WHEREAS** the University Press will contribute to community economic development by fostering deeper relationships with Cincinnati-area institutions, businesses, and government agencies; and
6. **WHEREAS** the estimated annual funding of \$750,000 needed from the University of Cincinnati to support the Press is relatively low when compared to the funds contributed to other agencies of the University;
7. **THEREFORE**, be it resolved that the University of Cincinnati Faculty Senate supports the proposed University of Cincinnati Press.

## **Item 2 – Request from Student government Regarding Mental Health and Title IX Statements**

"Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is a professional counseling office at the University of Cincinnati. They provide counseling and services for a number of issues and **each student receives five free counseling sessions**. CAPS provides services to address student needs such as anxiety, depression, trauma/assault, adjustment to college life, interpersonal/relational difficulty, sexuality, family conflict, grief and loss, disordered eating and body image, alcohol and substance abuse, anger management, identity development and issues related to diversity, concerns associated with sexual orientation and spirituality concerns, as well as many others. If after hours, please call CAPS Cares using the 24 Hour Phone Consultation Line at 513-556-0648. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) 225 Calhoun Street, Ste. 200 Cincinnati, OH 45219"

"Title IX is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of your actual or perceived sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Title IX also covers sexual violence, dating or domestic violence, and stalking. I am required by the University to report Title IX issues that are shared with me. If you disclose a Title IX issue to me I will forward that information to the Title IX Office. They will follow up with you about how the University can take steps to address the impact on you and the community and make you aware of your rights and resources. You are not required to talk with the Title IX Office."

## **Item 3 – Summary of information on Mid-Semester Review and Grade Forgiveness presented by Daniel O'Connor, Undergraduate Student government**

### **Mid-Semester Review**

- Students have voiced concerns that some faculty do not provide any progress evaluation to them until late in the semester, when it is too late to withdraw from the course.
- Student government is therefore requesting that a Mid-Semester Review Policy be adopted at UC. It would require that one week before the last day to withdraw from a class, faculty notify students of their current grade in the course. This could be via Gradebook on Blackboard or email.

- Mid-Semester Review is in line with UC's Complete College Ohio Plan (approved by Board of Trustees, 2014), which includes reinstating an early warning system for struggling students and consideration of implementing mid-term grades and early-term grades as part of the early alert process.
- Midterm grades are an important tool for academic advisors to use in implementing the Complete College Ohio Plan.
- Midterm review is particularly important in Gateway courses and for first year students.

### **Student Government Statement on Mid-Semester Review**

This policy is intended to address the concerns that many student have regarding faculty's use of Blackboard and their timely updates of graded assignments. Currently, every student at the University of Cincinnati is expected to use the Blackboard/Canopy portal in order to stay up to date with their classes. The vast majority of professors at the university use Blackboard to post assignments and class updates, however, there are a number of reported faculty that do not use the portal to update grades or class performance. In many cases, students are encouraged to meet with their professors in order to assess their class performance, and while the SGAAC encourages interaction between students and their professors, we also believe that this should not be the only means of transparency between faculty and students. As it stands, students can drift through an entire semester with no definitive grasp of their performance in a class until a grade is posted to Onestop at the end of the semester.

Many universities across the country require faculty members to utilize their respective "Blackboard" equivalents through the utilization of "Mid-term grades" or "Mid-semester review." Prime examples of these policies can be found at the [University of Buffalo](#), [Carnegie Mellon University](#), the [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#), and the [University of Nevada-Las Vegas](#). These policies require that faculty post unofficial grades for students halfway through the semester in order to better inform them on their classroom performance. Such policies also provide students the ability to assess themselves part-way through a semester in order to determine if they are doing well in a class, struggling in a class, or need to seriously consider withdrawing from a course. Some of the universities mentioned above, such as the University of Buffalo, have the reports sent to academic advisors as well in order to ensure that students have maximum resources at their disposal to obtain classroom success.

UC has investigated the creation of a system such as this in the past. On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 the University of Cincinnati Board of Trustees approved the University of Cincinnati College Completion Plan, which was written to address the Ohio Board of Regents Complete College Ohio initiative. On pages 6, 22, and 30 of the document there are suggestions for implementing and utilizing mid-term grades to serve as an early warning for students. It was also proposed to consider implementing them in gateway courses so that students in the first semesters of their programs would be aware of academic difficulty early on. That document can be found [here](#).

The SGAAC seeks a similar policy to maximize student success at the University of Cincinnati, and proposes the following:

1. Faculty members will post unofficial grades, either in the form of letter grades or percentages to Blackboard or their own personal gradebooks, for students in their courses one week before the official university Withdrawal date. These grades will reflect what the faculty member would distribute to the student if the semester were to end on that exact date.

2. Faculty will be exempt from this only in special situations. The SGAAC recognizes that some academic programs, such as those in DAAP or CCM, do not always utilize a traditional classroom format in which homework and tests are administered regularly throughout the semester.

There are a myriad of benefits such a policy will yield for undergraduate students. Students will be empowered to make more educated decisions on if they should withdrawal from courses in which they may be struggling. They will also be better equipped to assess themselves, and determine if they need to better allocate their focus and study habits to certain courses in which they are enrolled, or if they are performing sufficiently up to that point. The use of a mid-semester review could also aid the work of academic advisors, and better equip them to help students make informed choices leading up to the official withdrawal date each semester.

### **Grade Forgiveness**

- Grade Forgiveness is not the same as the current UC Grade Replacement policy. Grade Replacement allows a student to repeat up to 15 hours of coursework and replace a failing grade with the new course grade. Grade Forgiveness would allow a student who has a D or an F in a course and no longer needs that course for graduation (probably because of switching majors) to have the grade for that course deleted from GPA calculations.
- Grade Replacement encourages students to retake a course they would no longer need if they switched majors. They may therefore stay in a major even if they have discovered that it is not a good match for them.
- Grade Replacement depresses the student's GPA in the new major.
- Grade Forgiveness would apply to up to 3 courses. It could not be used for a course required for graduation or for the new major.
- The courses would stay on the transcript, but the grades would not be used in calculating GPA.
- In terms of fairness, students who transfer into UC get a fresh start on their GPA.
- Grade Forgiveness would help with graduation rates and time to graduation, save students money, and support retention.

### **Student Government Statement on Grade Forgiveness**

This policy is meant to address multiple concerns students have regarding the remedial policy of "Grade Replacement" at our university. For a full explanation of the Grade Replacement process, please refer to the following [web page](#).

As it stands, students often fall into a situation where their GPA is severely damaged due to tremendous academic struggles in an academic program they were previously enrolled in. Students can utilize the Grade Replacement policy in this situation, however, this often times forces them to retake classes that no longer count towards the graduation requirements for their new major; they can do a Grade Replacement, but only contingent on them paying the cost of three semester hours for a course they no longer need for graduation, and also no longer accurately reflects their ability to succeed in the discipline they are now engaged with. A student who switched from biomedical engineering to accounting should not have to do a grade replacement to amend their GPA after receiving a D in Medical Device Design I. Even if such

classes would count as elective credit, it is unfair to expect a student to retake a course in which they performed poorly, especially since they have a slew of additional courses available to them for the same elective credits. There is also very little guarantee that they will do much better the second time around.

There have been a variety of conversations had by administration concerning the current Grade Replacement policy, and whether it truly serves the interests of our students. At the University of Cincinnati, it is the intention of all stakeholders to maximize the success of our community, the vast majority of which comprises the undergraduate student body. The Student Government Academic Affairs Committee (SGAAC) believes that the University of Cincinnati provides a number of services to students struggling academically, but that more can be done to prevent students from slipping through the cracks. In a great deal of situations, this population is comprised of individuals that are perfectly capable college students, but ran into significant adversity due to a myriad of circumstances. Many students enter college pursuing a program that is not at all well suited to their strengths and interests, others face life-related challenges and personal struggles, and others still simply lack the motivation necessary to do well in school. Even in this latter group, a great deal can be attributed to being in the wrong major. To address this issue, the SGAAC has developed a new policy that, if implemented, will coexist in tandem with the Grade Replacement policy. This policy is referred to as “Grade Forgiveness.”

Several universities across the United States utilize a variety of remedial grade policies aimed at addressing the aforementioned situation in this document. A prime example exists at Clemson University. Information on Clemson’s “Academic Forgiveness Policy” can be found [here](#). As the page explains, students are able to have up to three courses in which a D or F was earned negated from calculation into their GPA. If Academic Forgiveness is used for a class required for graduation, the student is required to retake the class and perform satisfactorily. If Academic Forgiveness is used for a class that is no longer required for the student’s graduation requirements, they may choose not to retake the course. The SGAAC understands that with such policies, there will be questions raised about their fairness to students, and that there are two avenues of accountability between students and faculty. In order to address these issues, we propose the following:

- Students at the University of Cincinnati will have the opportunity to utilize Grade Replacement **OR** Grade Forgiveness for up to 10 semester hours. On the current Grade Replacement forms students are required to submit when retaking courses, the option to use Forgiveness on a class will be installed. If a student decides to use Forgiveness for a class, the following conditions apply.
  1. The student must have received a D or an F in the course
  2. The student must have changed their major since receiving such grades in the course or courses.
  3. A course for which forgiveness is being requested must no longer be a major requirement for the student’s graduation. In cases where the class may be able to count as an elective credit the course can still be used for forgiveness provided that other courses can be taken for the same elective credit.

4. If the student uses Grade Forgiveness for a course, they will be restricted from registering for that course in the future.
5. A student must obtain permission from their academic advisor to use Grade Forgiveness on a course. It is expected that the academic advisor will communicate with the appropriate faculty members regarding the student's situation.
6. If a student uses Grade Forgiveness on a course, the grade received in that course will be negated from calculation into the student's GPA.
7. Semester hours for courses that a student uses Grade Replacement or Grade Forgiveness on will be calculated aggregately. If a student uses Grade Forgiveness on a three credit hour course, they will be limited to seven remaining semester hours for which they can use Grade Forgiveness or Grade Replacement. The same applies in the reverse scenario.