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Deleting Classes First Day for Non-Attendance

Submitted by Linda Bleicken

3/28/2007

Response:

Discussion Item: Deleting Classes First Day for Non-Attendance, Attachment Dr. Linda Bleicken, Provost: Bleicken distributed a handout that senators would need to use as a reference.

Linda Bleicken (Provost) corrected a statement that Humphrey had made earlier in the meeting. The report was that the policy was a draft, and, in fact, the policy has been on the table since it came to the Senate in February 2006. What was a draft was the implementation plan. And that was an implementation plan that was actually distributed at Deans' Council. That may have been inadvertently where some of the issue [about implementation] began because the draft implementation plan was apparently discussed in a couple of colleges, and it was mistakenly referred to as, in at least one case, as having been approved by Faculty Senate. Bleicken apologized if that was said because senators know that that was not in fact the case. What Bleicken had distributed was the implementation plan. She stated that, in fact, in February 2006, the policy itself had been brought to Faculty Senate for a discussion, actually as an information item. She reminded senators that, in February of that year, "we had a very lively discussion about this policy, and, as a result of that discussion, the policy was sent back to the Enrollment Management Council, with a recommendation to do at least a couple of things." One was to gather further input from both students and from faculty. To do that, a survey was developed and placed on WINGS. Faculty were invited to respond as well as students. Data were collected, and that data, the survey results, were made available to Pat Humphrey as Faculty Senate Moderator, to Bleicken, to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, to the President, and so forth. This policy came forward to the President's Cabinet, was recommended for approval at that time, and was approved in June 2006. In 2006, at that June meeting, it was understood that the implementation plan "still had a lot of needs," and so at that point, Mike Deal, Registrar, was asked to chair a committee that would look at how to prepare a smooth implementation plan. That particular committee was one that was "very operational in nature," and that included people from Financial Aid, from the Business Office, the Dean of Students, a representative from the Provost's office, and also a representative from Information Technology Services. Mike Deal and his committee developed this

implementation plan. It was presented to the Deans' Council, and it was still in draft stage. Since Deal had been the one chairing this effort to develop a smooth implementation plan, Bleicken called upon him to speak. She mentioned that he had also been available in Tuesday's Academic Advisory Council meeting, and that he had spoken about this plan there, too.

Mike Deal (Registrar) made the following presentation about the implementation plan. He reported that it is still very fluid; they were making changes day-by-day based on suggestions from various groups. Some of what he wanted to share had to do with the questions that have been asked thus far. Pat Humphrey had covered a lot of this in her initial remarks, so he indicated that some of his presentation might be repetitive. He added that he might refer to the handout that had already been distributed and that he would note that as he spoke.

The following "bullets" are direct quotations as recorded during his presentation:

- First of all, there have been a number of questions of how this policy impacts the Attendance Verification, and what will faculty be doing differently. In the past, faculty have been asked to verify attendance during that first week. With this change in policy, faculty will be asked to verify on the first day of classes. However, you will not need to verify again later in the week except for those students who may be adding the class after the first day, after you do your Attendance Verification. And as Pat mentioned, one of the things that we're trying to do in order to make that process easier, is once faculty have verified the attendance for a class, then those students that have already been verified will be removed from your Attendance Verification form, and only those students who have added the class, have not been verified, will show up on that roster. So that will be one of the things that will be a change there.
- The next question that's come up a number of times has been the question about what can we do to help with the Attendance Verification in these larger classes, and Pat did mention some of the things we were working on with that. We do have a process that's already been developed that will take the scanning of the ID card information for the students, or if the student doesn't have their ID card, their ID # can be entered by the keypad. We'll take that information and load it into the Attendance Verification information, so that it would not require you to do anything as an instructor in those classes. We have done that successfully using a PC or a laptop with the mag stripe readers for the ID cards. We're also looking now at using some other technology using broadband and wireless technology with maybe some handheld devices, so we'll be actually experimenting with that in the summer with some of our larger classrooms....You can use the laptop or the PC in those classrooms that are already wired, but the issue there is that you need more stations for doing the scanning, so that's where the benefit of being able to use a wireless part or the broadband would be helpful there. So you can have the multiple stations. We also are looking at, along with the palms, that are the handheld devices, some of the clickers that are being used in some of the classrooms already to find out if that might be another way of capturing that attendance information for the student.

- An additional question has to do with students who have legitimate reasons for missing the first day of class, and I guess that is one of the big concerns that we've had. Trying to make that process as easy as possible for the student who really does have a genuine issue with being able to attend that first day. So, the ideas that have come to surface is that there would be the ability for the student who knows they're going to have to miss that first day to provide information as to why they need to miss that first day, and, of course, along with that having it on a web form would be one way to make it available to them. Or they would be able to call the WINGS helpline to provide that information or even talk to the instructor if that's possible. Once that information is received and that will trigger a flagging of that student's record so that the student would not be dropped from the class. It would require though that the student furnish documentable information as to an excuse that is what we consider valid. And you'll notice here in the handout that there is a draft of a statement that again is still in the works as to what will be considered valid. But basically it would be a medical problem, or maybe a death in the family, things that can be documented. There would be an email sent to the instructor if we receive the information via the web form, or through a phone call to the WINGS line, so that we would be sharing that information with the faculty member. Part of the information that will be asked for also is when will the student or when does the student believe that he/she would be able to attend the class because we know in some classes that that might be an issue if the student's not going to be able to attend for a week or two weeks or whatever. So with that information, hopefully, we can make good decisions about what needs to happen with that student.

- How often will the process be run to drop students from class? Initially, when we first discussed this, the idea was it would be run once a day. But in order to make the objective of making more seats available to students, once attendance has been verified, there will be a process run to do the dropping of the students from the class. So this process will run routinely. At this point it's planned to run every fifteen minutes.

- Will the process to drop classes be run each day the class meets? And the answer to that is, no, it'll just be run on the first day that the class meets. So we wouldn't be running it every day for every class.

- Questions about the waitlist. Again, Pat covered most of this, I think, but a couple of things. First of all, if the class is full, the student can register through WINGS for the waitlist. So it will be a part of the registration process that the student will already be doing as they're trying to get into the class. The same restrictions apply for the waitlisting as does for registration. So a student could not be waitlisted for a class that they're already registered for another section of [and] couldn't waitlist for a class that has a time conflict with another class. Students that are registering for the waitlist would be given a priority on a first come, first serve basis. So the first ones on the waitlist would be the first ones that would be eligible for a seat as seats become available. Students that are eligible for a seat that has become available and who are on the waitlist will get a message on their My.GeorgiaSouthern login page when the seat has become available. And the instruction there will be for them then to register for the class

if they still want it. As Pat said, we have been discussing the timeframe in which the class will be made available for them. Right now we are looking at making it available for 10 hours. Now there may be some issues with classes that are verified late in the day, and it may not be reasonable to have a student find out that there is a seat available for the class at 9:00 in the evening, and then be registered for it within the [next] 10 hours. So we'll be looking at that. There might be a more reasonable timeframe to establish for those.

- Another thing that we discussed more recently and I mentioned that this is a constant change in the implementation here, and that is the waitlisting for classes. And in the discussion yesterday with the Deans, it was decided that a waitlist would be established for all classes. So that will help in gauging course demand for classes, too. So there will be a waitlist established for all classes. Some of the ways of publicizing the fact that this policy is going into effect for summer term you see listed there in the handout. That's on the last page, page 5 of the handout, and most of these activities will take place beginning in the month of April. So beginning next week. All right, are there other questions that I might address?

Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator had a question. How is the waitlist going to work before classes start? The class was full, but then someone drops the class for fall. Now the class has a seat available, and people are on the waitlist.

Mike Deal (Registrar) responded that it would work exactly the same way as it would once classes start. If there are seats that become available and there are students already on the waitlist, those students would be eligible for those seats on, again, a first come, first serve basis.

Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator offered that this could be a little problematical if students are on vacation and don't get the email, and they miss their slot.

Mary Marwitz (CLASS) asked if a student can be on a waitlist for more than one section of a class. For example, if someone wants to get into an 1102 class, and she is on a waitlist for this section and nothing comes up, but then there are openings in other sections. In other words, can a student be on the waitlist for more than one?

Mike Deal (Registrar) answered that a student could be on the waitlist for more than one section of a class, but that the student would have to register for multiple sections of a waitlist.

Mike Nielsen (CLASS) distributed a government scholarship information page just because it seemed to him that this is the sort of opportunity we would want our students to be involved in. It funds various programs. They all have very definite requirements in terms of participating the entire length of the programs, and there are 34 programs this year for the scholarship. Our students would only definitely be able to participate in four of those because of the dates. Our Fall Semester starts a little bit sooner than many of

the programs end. He wondered if participating in one of these programs would be an acceptable reason for missing the first day of class, but it's not listed. He would like to have academic reasons acceptable for missing class. Nielsen added that, earlier that day while he was getting ready for this meeting, he found a one page handout regarding this issue. He printed it. Then, on his way to this meeting, he found a four or fivepage document in his office mailbox. At the meeting, he has now received this one, which has changed yet again. He remembered that a year and a half ago or during his previous term on the Senate, we talked about the sort of collegiality of having enough advance time to think about these sorts of issues. On the one hand, he was glad to have information; on the other, he was disappointed to find out he must have been sleeping when faculty were alerted to the fact that last June this policy was approved. He stated that "maybe I'm falling down on my job as a Senator, but, on the other hand, maybe someone else is falling down on the job in terms of letting faculty be more involved in these kinds of issues."

Linda Bleicken (Provost) responded that, in February 2006, following the conversation that we had then at Faculty Senate, there was a request for information that Nancy Shumaker responded to. Basically it was a point-by-point response that laid out what was going to happen with this policy. And it laid out at that time that an implementation plan would be developed, that there would be information or feedback gathered from faculty and from students, which did happen, and, that when these things had happened, it would come forward to the President's Cabinet for approval. This is what happened. At that time, it was also stated that this would not be implemented before summer 2007. "Now, the response or the acknowledgement from President's Cabinet that this had been passed, I don't know that that wouldn't have been a good idea to let you know that, but nevertheless, that piece of it didn't happen. But the progression of events before that ... was actually well publicized to the Faculty Senate."

Michael Nielsen (CLASS) remembered that he had helped with some of the survey questions. He added that approval of the policy might have been mentioned in the minutes and that he had forgotten.

Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator stated that the survey had gone forward and that she had reported on the results of the survey at last June's Senate meeting. However, she had not heard anything about it since then. Until faculty received copies of it [the implementation procedure] in their boxes and gave her negative feedback at that time, she had "sort of thought it went back under the woodwork."

Barry Balleck (CLASS) added that what troubles him the most on this is the communication issue. Since the implementation date of May 17 appears in big, bold letters, he assumed that the policy is going to be implemented. He asked if it would be possible to just write "draft" on the pages of something like this so that people know that this is a draft, that this is something that is fluid. He echoed what Mike Deal had said about fluidity. When Balleck printed the original handout at 11:00 a.m., there was one page. Someone else had gotten a sixpage policy, and then at the meeting, we have received a fivepage policy. "So I would say that is extremely fluid." His second concern

is that the people that are most affected by this are the students. And the week before spring break, when he first found out about this implementation plan and he asked the students about this at the Student Government Association (SGA) meeting, the SGA Executive Board did not know a thing about this. The Dean of Students was at that SGA meeting, and when Balleck asked him what he knew about this policy, he was not exactly sure what was happening, and he certainly didn't know that things were going to be happening on the first day of summer classes. And in talking to and being an advisor and talking to advisors, Balleck had asked advisors if they were putting students on waitlists, if they were advising their students that this was going to be happening on the first day of summer classes and into fall classes. We have already done advisement for summer and fall classes, and nobody was aware of this implementation plan. Balleck asked Mike Deal whether, if we have a class that is not full, we still drop students who don't show up on the first day. If we have a class that still has seats available and a student doesn't show up, does the policy then cover him/her as well? Mike Deal (Registrar) stated that the dropping of classes for students who do not attend will apply to any class, whether it has seats available or not.

Candy Schille (CLASS) suggested that perhaps senators were being invited to offer some fine tuning, so she made some suggestions. It seemed to her that a lot of the language in the implementation plan is very, very fluid. For instance, on exceptions to first day class attendance policy, she was not sure what "serious illness" means, how that is defined. Nor was she sure what an "immediate family member" is. And in regard to swiping an Eagle ID, "The whole thing about swiping your Eagle ID cards, anybody can swipe anybody's card." She added that she is not sure that the policy as written is all that workable whether or not it's necessary. Kelsey Grubbs (Vice President of Academic Affairs, SGA) echoed Balleck's statements earlier. SGA became aware of the implementation plan right before spring break. She recalled hearing about it at the June 2006 Senate meeting, and she has spoken to a lot of students about it recently. A lot of students didn't even know what she was talking about, much less that it was going to be implemented.

Clara Krug (CLASS) stated that, like Mike Nielsen (CLASS), she and Mary Marwitz (CLASS) had been discussing their concern that a previous Senate had voted that any documents, written documents, be provided to Senators two working days in advance of a meeting, so that senators may have time to review them. She felt certain we could find in the archives exactly the date. [Approved by the Senate 3272006; Approved by the President 4202006]. She agreed with Mike Nielsen that receiving this document about an implementation plan as we start to discuss it is not the optimum time for anyone to receive anything, even if the person agrees with it. She stated that she hoped that, in the future any faculty member/staff member/administrator would at least respect the fact that the Senate did vote that we are to receive any written documents two working days in advance of any meeting, which would have meant that we should have received this by 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 26th.

Mary Hadley (CLASS) wanted to discuss the potential problem identified by Mary Marwitz. There are many sections of English 1101 and English 1102. If a student is

waitlisted because she/he wants to have a class at 9:00 a.m., she can also be on waitlists for several other sections. If a person on multiple waitlists gets into Section A, but still appears on waitlists for the other sections, what happens to all the other students who appear on waitlists for those sections? In other words, one student is kind of dominating five classes because he/she's at the head of the line.

Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator asked Mike Deal if registering for one section automatically removes a student from waitlists for the other ones.

Mike Deal (Registrar) indicated that he needs to check into this issue before responding.

Mary Marwitz (CLASS) wondered if a student on multiple waitlists for a course could decline to enroll in the first section available and wait for others to open.

Mike Deal (Registrar) responded that he would check into this issue.

Ron MacKinnon (CIT) stated that implementing this policy has the potential to be a huge disaster, and he wondered if the people doing the analysis had thought up a pilot project. For example, "Take a smaller college, take a smaller school or something, try it, and see what the bugs are, work out the bugs. Because you are going to try to work out the bugs with the entire university and this is going to be potentially a major disaster." He stated, for example, that he can't register student attendance in his classes in one day. He would like to find out that somebody has tried it out, has found out what the problems are, and has worked out the problems.

Barry Balleck (CLASS) supported MacKinnon's statement. He added that the timing is really important. "We are six weeks out from May 15th, and we're still not really sure what we're going to do here." In addition, the students don't know about this plan yet, they are getting prepared for finals, they have final papers; they have projects. They have all sorts of things that they have to deal with, and to place this implementation plan on top of that would be a burden. He reiterated his concern that this policy was approved in June 2006, but that the Faculty Senate had heard nothing about it in Fall Semester 2006 or this semester. Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator reminded senators that results of the survey had been presented at the June 2006 meeting. She stated that she hadn't known that it had been approved in the President's Cabinet.

Barry Balleck (CLASS) read from Provost Bleicken's handout that, on the 12th of June, President's Cabinet had approved the implementation policy for summer 2007. He agreed with Mike Nielsen that senators had not received that information before the current discussion.

Bruce Grube (President) stated that there is a policy to do firstday drop. "The discussion today is really on the implementation plan itself. Some suggestions I think are pretty helpful here, but the insinuation that somehow this is all a deep, dark secret and a

conspiracy of some sort ... is a bit of a stretch. There's implementation stuff that goes on all over the campus, all of the time, and when anybody wants to know about it, I think people are more than willing to step forward and talk about it. I think that's what's happening here. But there's the policy that was settled. Now, we're in the implementation phase of it."

Barry Balleck (CLASS) agreed with Grube's statement. However, he added that, typically, when faculty members receive documents coming forward from Deans' Council, to chairs, they have "Draft" stamped on them when discussion is expected. This document does not include the word "Draft." Kent Murray (CLASS) had a question about a statement in the plan that "a student may be asking the instructor to save them from being dropped." He wanted to know if an instructor could say that students were there in class, when really they weren't. Mike Deal (Registrar) indicated that there will be another box to give the instructor the option of saving the student. But it does not mean the student was there, and the instructor would not be verifying attendance. The instructor would still have to verify their attendance when the students did show up.

Kent Murray (CLASS) asked about any time limit on that Mike Deal (Registrar) responded that there is none.

Patrick Novotny (CLASS) asked if there would be a box at the bottom of each class list allowing instructors to "click here to verify all." Might somebody do that for firstday drop? Would that affect federal financial aid?

Mike Deal (Registrar) stated that it would still operate the same way.

Candy Schille (CLASS) was not suggesting a conspiracy or anything like that. However, because of her impressions from the current meeting that many faculty and students do not favor this policy, she did want to know what other bodies do favor it and why and she requested their reasons.

Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator assumed that Enrollment Management and the President's Cabinet favor it.

Bob Jackson (COBA) spoke in favor of the policy and its implementation... It keeps people from scamming the financial aid by saying they were in class, among other things.

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA) had spoken with several students. They had problems with the exceptions to first day of class attendance policy. She also wondered why it mattered if a student missed the first day if most faculty members allow three absences.

Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator stated that the attendance policy varies.

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA) spoke in favor of flexibility. She didn't think that the first day of class should be any different than another class day. Being dropped on the first day of class is drastic.

Ellen Hendrix (CLASS) spoke in favor of the first day drop. One of her "pet peeves" is students showing up the second week of class. She, too, favors a pilot project, perhaps in English 1101 and 1102 classes because those classes have smaller numbers of students. She expressed appreciation for Mike Deal and those working in his office. She stated that she doesn't think that all faculty are against first day drop.

Candy Schille (CLASS) said that, since faculty members have the power to insist on their syllabi that students attend the first day of class, she did not understand why this policy is necessary. She asked for a response to her earlier question. Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator stated that the policy has always been that we expect students to attend every period. Candy Schille (CLASS) agreed and inquired as to whether it is up to the faculty member to decide the consequences.

Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator responded that it is.

Bob Jackson (COBA) likened the situation to employment: "I was just going to say, we show up the first day at work. You'd think we'd show up the first day of class." Patrick Novotny (CLASS) offered anecdotal evidence about the performance of students who miss the first day of class. He had found that there was virtually no correlation between first day attendance and performance in his courses during a four semester period. "In fact, what there were, there were two big groups. There was a big group who, as you might expect, who were not there on the first day... They didn't do very well. But what I found, too, that was kind of counterintuitive was that there was a large group of students [who had missed the first day] who did extraordinarily. Some of them were some of the best performers in the class."

Mary Marwitz (CLASS) agreed with others that we want our students to be there the first day because it launches the semester and sets the tone. However, she also agreed with Grubbs that "This one day carries with it catastrophic consequences, and where a student might miss a day for her wedding later in the term, if it happens on that first day, and then she's out the door." She, too, advocated a pilot program, and she suggested a window of two days instead of one.

Tim Giles (CLASS) also favored the idea of running some type of pilot program this coming summer. He mentioned a student who had approached him about an override for a class because he needs the class to graduate. Giles had approved the override. It seems to him that, with this firstday drop policy in place, granting an override will be practically illegal.

Marc Cyr (CLASS) moved to cease debate.

Candy Schille (CLASS) supported the motion. However, she had a question: Would ceasing debate mean that the policy would be implemented this summer as it is written now.

Linda Bleicken (Provost) reminded senators that this policy had passed [the President's Cabinet] back last summer. She acknowledged that senators had discussed some very good ideas during the current meeting. She believed the policy would go forward, and she recognized that some "kinks" still need to be worked out.

Bruce Grube (President) responded that one of the ideas, a pilot program, makes a lot of sense. He thanked Ron MacKinnon for mentioning it.

Patricia Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator reminded senators of the motion to cease debate on the floor. The motion passed unanimously.

Barry Balleck (CLASS) moved that we institute a pilot program for summer 2007 on classes to be determined.

Bruce Grube (President) indicated that he and Bleicken would institute a pilot program.

Barry Balleck (CLASS) withdrew his motion.