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9-9-2005

Revised Grade Point Average Policy

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Academic Standards Committee

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Approved by the Senate: 9/26/2005

Not Approved by the Senate:

Approved by the President: 9/28/2005

Nor Approved by the President:

Revised Grade Point Average Policy

Submitted by: Godfrey Gibbison

9/9/2005

Motion:

The Academic Standards Committee recommends changing current policy on grade point averages to eliminate the adjusted GPA. The new policy will be effective for students who first matriculate Fall 2006 and thereafter.

Rationale:

This suggestion has been discussed and debated in the committee for several years. It was last brought to Senate in February 2004 and returned so that Enrollment Management, etc could discuss and concur. It has now been approved by Enrollment Management and President's Cabinet. Academic Standards wants the policy in place before the majority of student recruiting this year.

SEC Response:

Approved by the Senate 9-26-05. Memo to Dr. Grube: I am pleased to report that the Senate recommends approval of the motion below presented by Senator Godfrey Gibbison on behalf of the Academic Standards Committee at the September 26, 2005, Faculty Senate meeting. MOTION: The Academic Standards Committee recommends changing current policy on grade point averages to eliminate the adjusted GPA. The new policy will be effective for students who first enroll Fall 2006 and thereafter.

RATIONALE: This suggestion has been discussed and debated in the committee for several years. It was last brought to Senate in February 2004 and returned so that Enrollment Management, etc could discuss and concur. It has now been approved by Enrollment Management and President's Cabinet. Academic Standards wants the policy in place before the majority of student recruiting this year.

Senate Response:

Bruce McLean (COST) asked if the GPA issue was also in the Librarian's Report.

Patricia Humphrey (COST), Senate Moderator, replied, no, that the GPA issue was a separation motion to be heard later. Dr. McLean apologized.

Motion by Godfrey Gibbison (COBA), "Revised Grade Point Average Policy"

Attachment: I want to just emphasize that actually this is not my motion, but the motion of the Academic Standards Committee. I'm just their spokesperson for today. The motion is to amend the language in the undergraduate and graduate catalog, pages 40 and 42. Page 40 of the catalog now has the first paragraph of the motion including the word "does not include transfer course work." It is bolded, but that is not part of our motion, that is currently in the catalog. The second paragraph in the motion is in the catalog now and that would be removed, and the paragraph in red would be added. The fourth paragraph is currently in the catalog as well, so that is just verbatim. And then on page 42, regarding repeating courses; we would replace the paragraph in the catalog as it is right now with two paragraphs that are in the motion. If you would like me to read them from the current catalog I can certainly do that.

Patricia Humphrey (COST), Senate Moderator: I think since everyone has a handout, it is fairly clear, and Ginger also has the handout for the minutes.

The motion was seconded, and Patricia Humphrey gave the floor first to Godfrey Gibbison to lead discussion on the motion.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): Thank you. I have been here for three years, and I have been hearing about the Campaign for National Distinction. It seems to me, and to the rest of the members of the Committee, (several of whom are here today) that this is one more step in raising our academic standards at the University. Dr. Bleicken mentioned that since we have raised the floor for incoming SAT scores, enrollment has actually increased and not decreased, as was feared, and that our retention rates have also gone up. Yet we still have this sort of abnormal system of an adjusted GPA which, in a sense, is a disincentive for students to perform at their full capacity. Furthermore, we spent a lot of time in the Committee last year looking at what we consider peer and aspirational institutions to see how many of them still have any such thing. Most of them do not have an adjusted GPA at all, and are operating along the lines that we propose, which is that the student can repeat a course if they so wish; all of the grades would count toward their GPA. The only exception we found was in the Florida System. In their system, a student can repeat a class, but after the third attempt, the student is charged a triple tuition. So there is a real cost to repeated courses beyond the second time in the

Florida System. Other than that, I think this really fits in with a long-term plan of the University for National Distinction, and very much fits in with what institutions that we compare ourselves to on a regular basis, are currently doing.

Laurie Markle (SGA): As a representative of the students, the Student Government met and discussed this issue. We came to the conclusion that the Student Government Association does not support this. We feel that it does not hurt the students to have it there, and we just want more clarification as to why it is absolutely necessary for us to do away with it.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): Well, actually, it does not help the students to have this. First of all let me make a couple of clarifications. It would not affect students who are currently enrolled. Students starting in the fall of 2006 would be affected by this. That's number one. Number two, it does not hurt students when their transcript has six Fs, and then one eventual C for College Algebra. However, when an employer or anybody else looks at the transcript, that looks really bad. And all we are doing here is raising the bar a little bit to say those six Fs and the one C will cost you something. The student will then make sure that from the very first time he/she takes College Algebra, he/she will get that C or B or A. So a student will leave here, starting after that group comes in next year, with a much stronger transcript than somebody who was relying upon the adjusted GPA before. In a sense this is actually very good for the students in terms of the strength that they are going to leave the University with.

Barry Balleck (CLASS): I'm the Senate Liaison to the SGA, and I have been involved in some of these discussions. I think what the students are saying is, and they understand that this is going to apply to students matriculating or coming in next year, they represent not only the body of students that are here, but the body of students that are potentially going to be here in the coming years, and again they do not see the damage to this. As you say, a potential employer may look at that and say, well, they took this class five times, and eventually got a C, but the converse is true as well. You may have a student who does poorly in a class for whatever reason, and yet they retake that class and gain a better grade. Our own Student Government President has an experience with that. My point was that sometimes this might be an abusive situation where you have somebody who comes for four weeks, never drops a class, receives an F, comes back the next semester, gets an A, and then, of course, they show that adjusted GPA. The discussion that I encountered with the SGA as I was sitting there was that this is a number that looks good on a transcript. It is not a falsification of their record by any stretch of the imagination. It is true representation of what they have done. They have retaken that class; it is recalculated, readjusted, and so forth.

And as I said, I think their major argument has been: What is the damage in having that at Georgia Southern? If it is simply a question of nobody else does it, is that a good

enough argument? Is that a good enough argument for it to be done away with at this point, and how much have the students been involved in this discussion? How much student input have we had in terms of this idea?

Alice Hall (CHHS): I have served on the Academic Standards Committee with several other colleagues in the room, and I was amazed at the stack of student appeals that we reviewed every semester. Our conclusion was that if the students are not performing well academically, we are doing them an injustice by letting them stay and by taking their money semester after semester. Without adjusting, the GPA will be an accurate assessment of student performance academically for all the classes taken. And Wayne is here. He can speak about how we looked statistically from an Enrollment Management point of view at how many students this would actually affect.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): Or I can, because I have the figures with me, Alice.

Alice Hall (CHHS): Okay.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): I have got the figures, so, as Alice mentioned, in the Academic Standards Committee we review students who have been excluded from the University and want to come back in. We do a lot of these each year, and, in most cases, we are talking about students who were doing rather poorly. If you look at undergraduate students with cumulative GPAs of less than 2.0 whose adjusted GPA has actually kept them on the campus, we are looking at somewhere between 3.5 to 4.5 percent of the students. (For any cohort, somewhere between 120 and 160 students.) And, basically, as Alice mentioned, the core of our discussion is that we are giving these students hope that they are actually going to finish a degree. And bear in mind, by the time students get to the Academic Standards Committee; they have had at least three semesters of really poor performance. They have had probation, and they have had restricted enrollment before their file comes to the Academic Standards Committee. And when a student spends twelve semesters here, and, in some instances, have had several semesters with a GPA below 2.0 or 1.0, they are either taking a student loan (because they have long lost the HOPE Scholarship) or paying themselves, it is almost as if we are cheating them to continuously take their money when they fail a course over and over again in the hope that they are going to pass. It is really unfair to the student, I think. And if the students eventually fail out, they could actually owe money for a degree never earned.

Marc Cyr (CLASS): On the front of it looking good on a transcript, I think I would have to disagree. I'd never even heard of an adjusted GPA before I came to Georgia Southern, and if I were an employer in a regular situation, and I saw an adjusted GPA, as well as a cumulative GPA, on a transcript, I'd wonder what the heck it was and what kind of school this person had gone to. I think that the cumulative GPA is much more reflective of a student's academic performance. I think it is a spur to academic performance, and I

think that making our transcripts for our students more reflective of the standards that are held at the best schools in this country is doing our students a service all the way down the line.

Barry Balleck (CLASS): I do not disagree with the premise. In fact, I would probably be supportive of this. My whole premise is how much were the students brought in on this? Because what I am saying is that we have got the Academic Standards Committee saying this is the law of the land, and yet we have not had student input. It sounds as though the SGA has sort of had this as a *fata compli*, and they have been presented with this, and I don't know how much input we have gotten from the Student Government or from the students themselves in terms of how this is going to impact them. My sense in the SGA discussions was that many students were concerned about this, and wanted to be able to voice their opinion. Of course, they were voicing it in the SGA meetings. Have we had a forum on this where we have had students? I mean, we have forums on this campus for everything.

Patricia Humphrey (COST), Senate Moderator: In all honesty, to answer your question, no, there has been no forum, and I would submit that if a change in major or something like that is coming through the Undergraduate Committee or Graduate Committee, do we ever consult the students about that either?

Barry Balleck (CLASS): No, but you are saying something that is directly impacting students in this situation, and students are concerned obviously about these sorts of things, and, again, we are a teaching institution first and foremost. We are concerned about our students. That is our primary audience here; our primary target. My suggestion would be to put a cap on the number of times you can take a course. You know, we could say that a student might take a course twice or three times, and that would be it. You cannot take a course after that long a time. And that happens in other universities as well. I know that.

Jonathan Buckney (Executive VP, SGA): I would like to ask the Faculty Senate if we can have a look at those numbers that we did not have a chance to look at before. All I can say is that during this summer, maybe July, we received an email from somebody from the Faculty Senate, with the proposed changed paragraph, and the email asked us to discuss this without seeing numbers; without seeing anything else. And when we took this to our general senate, we ran into this problem that we are presenting to you today. This is what the students have said to this. We would like to see those numbers, and we would like to bring more than just the Student Government Association in on it. We would like to plan a forum, if we could. This affects all students.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): I just have two comments. One is they got the proposal in July, and nobody responded to ask us about the proposal. I would have responded to a

request. Number two is that we do not have forums on the catalog, and everything in this catalog affects students. We make changes to the catalog every single year that affects the new cohort who comes in under that catalog. We do not have forums with the current students on those issues.

Bruce McLean (COST): On the other side of the issue, if you do not put a cap on the number of times students can take a class, a math major could take college algebra, eight semesters, and get As every semester, and raise his average. What prevents that?

Richard Fynn (CLASS): I would like to call the question.

Patricia Humphrey (COST), Senate Moderator: The motion has been made to call the question. That requires a two-thirds majority. A vote was taken and the motion carried, so we call the question. We are now voting on whether or not we want to approve the motion and the catalog word change about the adjusted GPA. The motion was approved by a show of hands.