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PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE

TITLE: Statement of Recommendations on Finals Week

SUBMITTED BY: Calendar Committee

DATE: October 31, 2003

ACTION: Consultative

REFERENCE: Faculty Handbook – Faculty Policies: Teaching - Tests and Examinations

PURPOSE: To protect and strengthen the academic integrity of the final examination week at the University of Dayton, the Academic Senate recommends adoption of and adherence to the following principles and practices.

- The final examination week^[1] exists to facilitate a multiplicity of culminating learning experiences.^[2] Every course of study, undergraduate and graduate^[3], must conclude with an academically rigorous culminating learning experience. Other than in rare cases^[4], culminating learning experiences will be timed so that students can benefit academically from the existence of ‘finals week.’
- Graduating seniors should participate in the same culminating learning experiences that are scheduled for all students in a particular course of study. The practice of requiring faculty to submit ‘early’ final letter grades for graduating seniors prior to the conclusion of finals week is thereby impractical and, henceforth, prohibited.^[5]
- Study days^[6] provide students with necessary and valuable time to prepare academically for rigorous final examinations. No final examination week will begin, therefore, without a minimum of one study day. Scheduling two consecutive study days is strongly preferred.^[7]

^[1] *The final examination week* is defined as the sum of one full week of scheduled examinations, the weekend immediately preceding, and a minimum of one study day. ‘Finals week’ is therefore minimally of *eight* days in duration.

^[2] *Culminating learning experience* is a term meant to underscore the Academic Senate’s recognition that it is appropriate that some types of courses do not and should not conclude with traditional, in-class examinations. Instead, courses may conclude with academically rigorous projects, presentations, performances, critiques, portfolios, and et cetera, which themselves may or may not be cumulative in scope.

^[3] Due to its independent academic calendar, the School of Law is exempt from this statement of principles and practices.

^[4] With the approval of the authoritative department chair, a rare course of study might conclude in its entirety prior to the onset of the final examination week. Several courses in the School of Business Administration and in the School of Engineering, for example, typically conclude with presentations to paying clients that are scheduled prior to the onset of the final examination week. Since there are only few such courses, this practice will not generally undermine the integrity of the University’s finals week, nor will but the rarest individual student enter a finals week without *any* scheduled culminating learning experiences.

^[5] Adoption of this principle will require a revision of current commencement practice. A likely scenario is thus: students will be allowed to ‘walk’ in commencement if they are approved by their respective Office of the Dean. (An Office of the Dean is likely to approve students who are registered for course work that, with passing grades, would fully satisfy graduation requirements.) At commencement, students will receive an *uncertified* (unsealed and unsigned), proxy diploma. (Among other things, this will facilitate commencement day photography.) After graduations have been properly certified, students will be posted their certified diplomas and official transcripts. Note: in this illustration, it is possible that a tiny number of students will ‘walk’ at commencement who have not completed necessary degree requirements. The Academic Senate understands that this or a similar revision of commencement practice is needed to protect and strengthen the academic integrity of finals week, and that an unfortunate and likely quite rare scenario such this is a small price to pay for the greater good of finals week reform.

[6] A *study day* is defined as a day without scheduled courses or other required university-sponsored activities that is set aside for the purpose of maximizing students' time for pre-examination academic preparation.

[7] While two consecutive study days are strongly preferred, a second study may, if necessary, coincide with a university holiday (e.g., The Feast of Immaculate Conception).