

IFC Academic Affairs Committee - Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 24th from 11a-1p in UL 2115G

Members Present: Gibau, Kitchens, Lupton, Marrs, Ritchie, Salama, Smith, Orme, Watt, Wright (Chair); Guests Present: Gayles Williams, Amy Maldi, and Mary Beth Myers

11:05-11:10 - Welcome and Introductions. The Chair invited members of the committee and the guests to introduce themselves. The Chair provided an overview of the agenda.

11:05-12:00. Discussion of the New University College Policy on Withdrawals (Guest Gayle Williams). The Chair invited Gayle Williams, Assistant Dean of University College, to explain the new policy. She explained that research suggests that students who complete less than 26 credit hours are less likely to be successful in college. University College was also concerned about the mounting debt and the fact that students were relying on W's rather than utilizing resources available (e.g., Math Assistance Center, University Writing Center). They examined data from IUPUI and found that "About 10% of the fall 2006 freshmen with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher withdrew from two or more courses compared to 20% for their counterparts with a GPA below 2.0" and "Only a small number of students dropped more than three courses." Other data from 2007 and 2008 freshmen achievement as well as from analysis of withdrawals among 2006-2007 bachelor's degree recipients suggest similar patterns. Jeff Watt also reported that at a recent regional meeting of higher education experts, it was noted that private as well as public institutions are limiting the number of drops and this is improving their retention rates.

Assistant Dean Williams reported that University College adopted a new policy which stated:

University College first-year students (25 credit hours or below) may not drop more than one course per semester. This policy will be enforced through advisor sign-off on drop requests. This policy does not include course adjustments made during the first week of class nor does it apply to classes in which a student has been "administratively withdrawn."

She then described the procedures University College was using to implement the policy. Specifically, they trained the advisors to be very rigorous in their working with students to discuss the rationale for all drop requests. Students who had compelling reasons for dropping were then referred to the Assistant Dean who was the ultimate decision-maker. This significantly reduced the number of withdrawals and increased the likelihood that students who did withdraw would be successful in subsequent semesters.

The Committee discussed the policy. There was a consensus that if we have such a policy we should be more proactive in providing guidance to students, in particular, talking

frankly with students who drop a second course that they are at much higher risk for not being successful in graduating. Concerns also were voiced that this policy could be very restrictive for students who have multiple commitments, are required to take many difficult courses to graduate, and must maintain course loads to maintain eligibility for financial aid. Committee agreed that all schools should do more to make wiser choices in course scheduling to balance their commitments and what will be required of them in college. University College is trying to expand an online orientation/web portal to help engage students and start them thinking about what they should think about in registering and what they can expect when the enroll and start taking courses.

The Chair invited Dr. Williams to share her views on whether the University College policy should be adopted campus-wide. Dr. Williams hesitated to make a recommendation; however, she noted that it might be effective but would require reinstating the campus policy that students have to get their advisors' signature on all withdrawals. She noted further that federal financial aid officials are considering a new policy that would not allow financial aid funds be used to retake a course that the student failed or dropped. Committee members agreed that more discussion of a campus wide policy is necessary. Committee member Josh Smith agreed to do some background research and develop a draft policy for discussion at the April meeting for wider-discussion and adoption consideration in the fall.

12:00-1:00 Continuation of Discussion of Proposed Changes to the IUPUI Probation, Dismissal, and Forgiveness Policy. The Chair reminded members that at the last meeting the committee reviewed and discussed the existing policy regarding probation, dismissal and forgiveness (available at: <http://www.iupui.edu/~fcouncil/documents/probation-dismissal-reinstatement.htm>) and recommended that the General Provision #6 be clarified based on procedural concerns offered by Mary Beth Myers, the IUPUI Registrar. Specifically, it was recommended that Provision #6 of the General Provisions of the IUPUI Policy for Undergraduate Probation, Dismissal, and Reinstatement should be amended to include the following statement: "Calculation of the IUPUI GPA will need to be done manually in each academic unit." Our recommendation was submitted to the Academic Policies and Procedures Council (APPC) in early March by members Marrs and Watt. The APPC had a lively discussion.

Watt and Marrs, who were present for the APPC discussion, shared that the APPC's initial reaction was to question the meaning of "dismissal" and other key terms. Specifically, it was asked what does it mean to be dismissed from a school? Does this, in turn, mean that a student was dismissed from the campus? Subsequent questions seemed to revolve around how terms are defined and whether they are school, campus, or system-level policies (e.g., calculation of GPAs). The sentiment of the APPC was that the IFC AAC should conduct a systematic review of all the relevant policies and try to standardize language and develop a single policy that applies across campus. Watt suggested that this would probably be a year-long project.

Mary Beth Myers, IUPUI Registrar, and Amy Maida, Herron Students Services Director, joined the Committee for this conversation and summarized the complex history

surrounding the development of the relevant policies. The consensus of the committee was that policies regarding dismissal have been developed in silos and are not consistent. Mary Beth Myers outlined several inter-related issues that were embedded in the APPC discussion which warrant closer study by the Committee.

1. Development of an IUPUI dismissal policy, including the appropriate definitions (e.g., dismissal versus “released” from a specific school).
2. Policies for the Calculation of GPAs. This would include the original AAC proposal, but expanding it to include a review of the different types of GPA calculations and a discussion of the possibility of Registrar’s report that would allow the enforcement of any revised policy.
3. Review and Revised the Grade Forgiveness Policy for Returning Students. Consider reviewing IU East’s newly proposed “Fresh Start” program, which is advocating for a major policy change to truly forgive grades (setting IU GPA back to 0.00) prior to a given point with the endorsement of a school. Purdue has a policy that allows students to return and “prove themselves” by successfully completing 12 credit hours and then consider grade forgiveness.
4. Consider an Expanded Grade Replacement Policy (“X” a course out of the IU GPA). This policy and practice should be considered because it will impact a broader forgiveness policy.
5. Review Medical Withdrawal Procedures to help the students process the paperwork; however, a policy is needed to clarify that the standards against which a withdrawal request is granted should remain with the academic units.

Committee members offered some initial thoughts regarding these large issues but were in unanimous agreement that more discussion is needed and that this would probably should be the focus of next year’s agenda.

12:55-1:00 – New Business and Plan for Final Meeting of this Academic Year. The Chair announced that the IFC Executive Committee has asked if any standing committees would be submitting formal policy recommendations for consideration at the April or May IFC meetings. No members felt that formal recommendations would be ready for consideration prior to the end of his academic year; however, the Chair noted that the Committee may be able to submit its report regarding the new IUPUI Honors College for the May meeting but that this would not be clear until after the April meeting.

The Chair then invited members to offer additional agenda items. Bruce Kitchens asked the Committee to consider the fact that IUPUI faculty historically have underutilized the sabbatical leave policy, especially when compared with other IU campuses and Purdue. Dr. Kitchens volunteered to collect empirical information on IUPUI faculty access to sabbatical leave policy and share it with the Committee and the IFC Executive Committee for possible consideration by the IFC Faculty Affairs Committee next year.

Finally, the chair thanked the members for the thoughtful discussion and announced that the topics for the April (and final meeting for this academic year) would be: 1) a follow-up meeting with Dean Jane Luzar from the IUPUI Honors College); 2) discussion of the adoption of a campus-wide policy limiting the number of withdrawal; and 3) discussion of the final, year-end report for the committee.

The April meeting will be held on April 28th from 11-1pm in UL 2115J.
