

Attachment #6

**To: Dr Ana Börger-Greco, Chair, Faculty Senate
Faculty Senators**

From: Dr Scott Schaffer, Senator, Sociology/Anthropology Department

Date: February 20/2007

Re: Proposal to change the deadline for final grade submissions

Just before the end of Fall 2006, the Registrar's Office announced that the deadline to submit final grades was to be one day earlier than the usual Wednesday after final exams are completed. In discussions with the Registrar, the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Provost afterwards, I discovered that the primary reason for this shortened deadline had to do with the need to inform students on academic probation of their dismissal in a timely enough manner to allow them to appeal that decision. To wit, the Governance Manual states:

A student who is given a warning, placed on probation, or dismissed, and who believes that there were specific circumstances which adversely affected his/her academic performance, may request a review by writing a letter of appeal to the Academic Standards Committee and may request a personal interview before the committee.

In order to be acted on for the next semester, letters of appeal must be received by the committee within eight (8) working days from the date that appears on the notice of warning, probation or dismissal. (Section 3: Undergraduate Academic Policies, Academic Standards, Probation, Dismissal, Subsection 4)

In essence, there is a fundamental conflict at work in this policy and in the time frame allowed for the evaluation of final coursework – namely, the tension between *the faculty's desire to make the evaluation of a final examination or paper a pedagogically beneficial exercise* and *the need to allow those students failing out of the university to appeal that decision*. Put another way, the needs of the few – 200 or so students every semester – to appeal the consequences of their failure to meet the standards of the university is outweighing the needs of the many, both faculty and students, to receive the greatest educational benefit out of their final coursework.

Note that in all of this, there is no requirement that final grades be submitted prior to the University commencement exercises for students ostensibly graduating; hence, those who are allowed to walk through commencement ceremonies could potentially not be graduating at all.

I have a solution to this problem that I propose that the Academic Policies Committee (APC) consider; namely:

- That APC recommend to the Provost that there be a two-stage process for final grade submission, wherein *grades for students already on Academic Probation and those who have applied for graduation be due prior to that semester's commencement exercises*, and *grades for all other students be due two weeks after the end of the semester* in order to allow faculty members to provide useful feedback and evaluations of student work;
- That the Registrar's Office be required to provide faculty members with a list of students who are currently on Academic Probation or subject to Academic Dismissal proceedings, as well as those who have applied for graduation in that term, so that they know whose grades need to be completed first;
- That a policy be instituted whereby students who are neither graduating nor on Academic Probation may request of their professors that their work be "triaged" so that they may receive their grades early;
- That the Registrar's Office work with the tenders of Banner and/or SAP to allow grades to be immediately posted to students' transcripts and grade reports, rather than waiting for them to be rolled 30 hours after the submission deadline, *or* to allow students to access their DARS during the evaluation period;
- That a full and complete explanation of the rationale for the "delay" in the grade submission deadline be made to the University community.

In a time where paper grade reports are neither "posted" on campus nor mailed to students, and where students are required to use electronic systems to access their grades, there is no practical need for either such an early deadline nor the 36 hour delay in posting grades. Likewise, there is a greater pedagogical benefit in allowing faculty members to take more time to evaluate student work *if they see fit*, while at the same time ensuring that the needs of graduating seniors and students subject to Academic Dismissal are met.

I thereby request that Faculty Senate decide to recommend the development of this policy to the Academic Policies Committee, and request that APC develop such a policy for approval with all due haste.