Academic Affairs Committee

Report on University Withdrawal Policy

**Charge**

By the first meeting of the Faculty Senate in January 2017, prepare an updated/revised plan for the UCA student course withdrawal policy. Make sure you consider/coordinate with the following:

* Impact on students to include visas, scholarships, VA loans, etc.
* Concerns of UCA faculty.
* Impact on the registrar, admissions and any other UCA staff.
* Policies at our peer and aspirant institutions and 4 year colleges in Arkansas.
* Other as you deem appropriate.

The Committee met with or spoke to the Registrar, the Assistant Registrar, Veteran Services, and many faculty. After several months of discussion, we propose a new policy.

**Current Policy**

A student may officially withdraw from a course or the university so long as the withdrawal is within the dates specified in the academic calendar for the semester. If a student withdraws from a course or the university during the change-of-course period, no grade will be recorded.

After the change-of-course period, a withdrawal grade (W – Withdrawn, WP – Withdrawn Passing, or WF – Withdrawn Failing) will be recorded according to the deadlines specified in the academic calendar for the semester and, when applicable, at the discretion of the course instructor, so long as the course instructor has not already dropped the student for non-attendance.

If a student discontinues attendance without officially withdrawing, an instructor may drop the student for non-attendance and report a withdrawal grade of WF, but must do so by the deadline date for a student to officially withdraw with a WP or WF specified in the academic calendar for the semester.

* UCA policy allows students to withdraw from a sixteen-week course with a grade of “W” during the eleventh week of classes (with correlating deadlines for eight-week and summer terms)
* UCA policy allows students to withdraw from a sixteen-week course with a grade of “WP” (Withdraw Passing) or “WF” (Withdraw Failing) during the fifteenth week of classes (with correlating deadlines for the eight-week and summer terms)

**Findings**

1. The committee found that the use of WP and WF grades have been used inconsistently across campus with few faculty members assigning a WF under the belief that it is unfairly punitive. Despite the value of the WP and WF grades [being clearly posted](http://uca.edu/ubulletin/general-policies-information/academic-records/), there still remains confusion as to the difference between a W, a WP, and a WF. A WF is a value of 0 on a 4.0 scale; the other designations are not applicable to the scale.
2. The Committee reviewed the withdrawal policies of UCA’s [peer](http://uca.edu/ir/peer-institutions-lists/uca-peer-institutions/) and [aspirant](http://uca.edu/ir/peer-institutions-lists/uca-aspirant-institutions/) universities, Arkansas’s four-year colleges and universities, and [Southern Conference peers](http://uca.edu/ir/peer-institutions-lists/southland-conference-peer-institutions/); only eight of the fifty-eight colleges and universities reviewed use “WP” and “WF” grades, indicating to us that the distinction may not be useful.
3. While there are varying opinions as to when students should be able to withdraw from a course, the committee believes having the deadline less than a week from the last day of classes is too generous to students. Specifically, such a policy allows a student to absolutely fail a course with no academic consequence.
4. The aforementioned review of colleges and universities reveal that students at other institutions are allowed to withdraw from a course an average of sixty-eight days from the first day of classes during the fall 2016 semester; twenty-six of those universities had “W” deadlines within sixty to seventy-seven days after the first day of classes; eleven had “W” deadlines earlier than the sixtieth day of classes, and thirteen had “W” deadlines later than the seventy-seventh day of classes. Our current “W” deadline (which in fall 2016 was seventy-one days after the start of classes) is in line with many of our peers, but an adjustment may need to be made to allow for the timely grading of assignments and submission of midterm grades.
5. UCA has an administrative withdrawal procedure to address students who experience [a serious medical issue, mental health issue, or death of a family member](http://uca.edu/student/administrative-withdrawal/), thus allowing students who have a major issue to obtain help without adversely affecting their academic standing. The committee makes no recommendation to change this policy.

**Recommendations**

1. Grade Options

The Committee recommends eliminating the “WP/WF” distinction and apply only a “W”, which will not be applicable to the grade scale. However, there are constituencies on campus, (specifically veteran’s affairs and international engagement) that need to know if a withdrawal was initiated by the student or by the instructor or an administrator (withdrawal for non-attendance). To accommodate this, the committee is proposing a grade of “WA” meaning “administrative withdrawal” which will not be applicable to the grading scale. That is, the option to assign the “WF” and a value of 0, same as an “F”, will be eliminated and students will not have a “WA” count in their GPA.

Options left to the student will only be “W”.

Options left to the instructor will only be “WA”.

1. Deadlines

The Committee recommends the last day for a student to drop a class in a fall or spring semester be the the Friday of the twelfth week of classes. Though this is earlier than the current WP/WF deadline, students should still have adequate time to assess their progress and affirm their commitment to the course.

The Committee further recommends that instructors can assign a “WA” at any point in the semester except as a final grade. An instructor’s attendance policy can then extend to the final day of instruction, but forces a grade point value be given as a final grade.

**NOTE**: If a student reaches the limit of maximum allowable days missed after final grades can be posted, as long as the instructor has stated in the syllabus that a grade of “F” may be assigned in this case, then the instructor can assign an “F” even if the grading system stated by the instructor in the syllabus indicates a passing grade.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony McMullen, Chair, COB

Becky Bogoslavsky, At Large, UC

Lynn Burley, CLA

Larry Dilday, CFAC

Rahul Mehta, CNSM

Lisy Ray, At Large, CHBS

Wendy Rickman, COE