

# **ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE**

**2017-2018 Summary Report**

**Submitted by Deeanna Button, Chair**

**May 16, 2018**

**Committee Members:** Deeanna Button (Chair), Robin Hernandez-Mekonnen (Vice-Chair), Chris DiSanto, Leo Previti, Ron Tinsley, Geoffrey Gust, Carla Enriquez,, Michael Hayes, Carole-Rae Reed, Eric Jeitner, Kelly Keenan, Jeni Forestal, Michelle McDonald (Ex Officio), Amy Beth Glass (Ex Officio), Peter Straub (Ex Officio)

**Meeting Dates:** September 12, 2017, October 10, 2017, November 7, 2017, March 6, 2018, April 5, 2018, Online discussion May 10-16, 2018

## **Charges:**

1. Disability, Accessibility, and Reasonable Accommodations Procedure
2. Repeat Course Practice
3. Academic Honesty Procedure
4. Undergraduate Transfer Credit
5. Course Audit Policy and Procedure (online discussion only)

### **Charge #1: Disability, Accessibility, and Reasonable Accommodations Procedure**

The committee reviewed the document, but did not develop or vote on a formal recommendation. The committee requested clarification on what sections need review by the APC (e.g., sections relevant to faculty role in the classroom and coursework-related issues only?). The committee also recommended a reorganization of the document, the inclusion of additional information about LAP services, and the roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff in meeting accommodations. The committee requested an outline that includes each step of the procedure, who the relevant players are, and what their responsibilities are.

### **Charge #2: Repeat Course Practice**

Student Senate requested a review of the Repeat Course Practice. The current practice reads:

*In order to repeat a course, the student must re-register, pay all appropriate tuition and fees, and complete the course satisfactorily (whereupon a separate grade will be assigned). **The original grade will remain on the student's permanent transcript and will be calculated in the grade point average.** Except where specified in the Catalog of Courses, a course passed more than once may only be counted once toward graduation.*

Student Senate requested modifying "the original grade will remain on the student's permanent transcript and will be calculated in the grade point average" to "**the original grade will remain on the transcript and only the higher grade calculated into the GPA.**"

The APC did not recommend modifying the repeat course practice for the following reasons:

1. Stockton allows students to repeat a course three times and has a late withdrawal period; students are already provided with multiple opportunities to increase and/or protect their GPA.

2. Changing the practice may create a greater demand for seats in classes. Repeat students potentially limit seats for new students and place additional demand on faculty and university resources.
3. Changing the practice may be misleading to employers or graduate admission committees because students' ability/attainment record is not accurately portrayed.
4. Changing the practice allows well-resourced students to grade shop. Those who have greater financial means are more able to repeat previously passed courses for higher grades, making them more marketable than students who do not have the resources to repeat courses.
5. Changing the practice allows/encourages students to unnecessarily repeat classes which will lead to an unnecessary increase in student debt.
6. Changing the practice is unnecessary because graduate schools independently calculate GPAs to include an average of repeat courses; applications also allow students to explain issues with GPA or poor performance in any given class.

**Committee Vote:            Do not modify the current repeat course practice.**  
 In favor = 10, Opposed = 1, Abstained = 0

Student Senate continued to advocate for a change in the practice. Deeanna Button and Michelle McDonald met with Student Senate Vice President, Stephanie Harvey, several times individually and collectively, to review data from other institutions and explain the APC's rationale for the recommendation. Michelle offered to attend a Student Senate meeting to help explain the nuances of the current practice, in relation to our late withdrawal period, and to review other institutions' practice so that Student Senate is more aware of how Stockton's policy is actually very student friendly. Student Senate has not yet reached out to move forward with that offer.

**Charge #3: Academic Honesty Procedure**

The [Academic Honesty Procedure](#) was modified during the 2016-2017 with the approval of the APC and Faculty Senate (4/18/2017). The modification included changing the practice of invoking a suspension for a second offense, without transcript notation to invoking a suspension for a third offense, with transcript notation. In its current version, the policy does not explicitly address procedure for second offenses, although it does note that a student may face suspension for egregious first or second offenses.

The APC was asked to again review the current [Procedure](#) in consideration of several concerns raised at the Spring 2017 Faculty Senate retreat. The APC invited John Smith, Assistant to the Provost, to provide insight into the following faculty concerns:

1. **Increase number of faculty participating:** The current procedure states at least three members. John Smith explained that it is typically only three members because it is very difficult to coordinate faculty schedules with the student's schedule in the short time frame. Typically, there is not disagreement among faculty members and overturning the charge is rare.
2. **Make the school representative an elected position:** On 4/21/2015, the senate approved the resolution that the Academic Honesty Committee would be an elected position where the

election cycle and term length is the same as those of all other senate committees. The Provost's Office will send reminders to school Deans at the next election.

3. **The Board should be comprised of tenured associate professors and up:** This may make scheduling even more difficult.
4. To address the fourth and primary concern, **the second offense sanction gap**, a sub-committee was formed.
  - a. The sub-committee was comprised of **Deeanna Button**, APC Chair and Representative, **Marcia Fielder**, Academic Honesty Appeals Board, **Jennifer Forestal**, APC and SFT Representative, **AmyBeth Glass**, APC and Graduate Studies Representative, **Michael Hayse**, APC Representative, **Michelle McDonald**, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, and **John Smith**, Assistant to the Provost.
  - b. The sub-committee reviewed Stockton's current **Academic Honesty Procedure**, academic **dishonesty reports and appeals data** from the Provost's Office, Academic Honesty **Procedures from other institutions**, primarily from Penn State University, **disciplinary sanctions** in Stockton's Student Code of Conduct, and the **library's educational resources** on academic honesty, plagiarism, and citations
  - c. The sub-committee presented **four recommendations** to the full APC. The full APC generally supported the recommendations, and **added fifth recommendation**, but did not develop or vote on any formal recommendations. In Fall 2018, the APC will create sub-committees to move forward in developing each recommendation; once tangible items have been created and deliberated at full APC, a formal recommendation will be made and a vote will be taken.
    - i. The use of a **web-based form** to standardized reports of academic dishonesty. With permission, we will model the form after Penn State. It will include a faculty and student portion. Faculty will still be required to communicate with the student before submitting the form to the Provost's office; students will be required to acknowledge receipt of the form.
    - ii. The use of a **sanctioning rubric** that, with permission, will be modeled after Penn State. The rubric will provide guidelines for faculty on suggested *academic sanctions*. Academic sanctions include penalties related to the course and are invoked by the reporting faculty member. Examples of academic penalties may include a warning, resubmission of an assignment, grade reduction on the assignment, a zero for the assignment, a grade reduction in the course, an F for the course, or dismissal from the academic program. Recommended sanctions will be based on the assumption that it is a first time offense. The rubric will have recommended sanctions based on the level of severity for a first time offense. Faculty will be encouraged to consider the student's class status, including graduate-level standing.
    - iii. The use of **mandatory disciplinary sanctions**, to be employed by the Provost's office, for second offenses. *Disciplinary sanctions* are defined in the [Student Handbook](#) (pgs.93-94) and include penalties beyond the course. Examples of disciplinary sanctions include educational assignments, a \$50 fine, a warning, probation, suspension, or expulsion. There was not consensus at the sub-committee to move forward with this recommendation. At full

committee, this recommendation was discussed at length. Among faculty present at the meeting, there is general agreement that the gap for the second offense needs to be addressed. Faculty agree that there should be a mandatory disciplinary sanction, although the Provost's office should determine which disciplinary sanction is most appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

It was agreed that the next step is to draft language to add to the Procedure.

Points to consider in next steps: a) Will specific disciplinary actions be noted in the procedure? b) Will disciplinary actions come only from the code of conduct, or should other ideas and actions be considered (some sort of service to the University, additional academic honesty training, etc.)? c) Suggestions on organizing/editing the procedure.

- iv. The full APC added a **need for preventative education**. Incoming students should do a short training on academic dishonesty and continuing students should be required to undergo annual academic dishonesty training.
- v. The APC did not discuss the final sub-committee recommendation, which includes an **update to library website** to include more readily accessible resources on plagiarism and citation guides. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

#### **Charge #4: Undergraduate Transfer Credit**

Enrollment management is attempting to make Stockton more attractive to transfer students and requests modifications to the Undergraduate Transfer Procedure. Two changes were proposed.

1. The APC supported the first change, which allows students to transfer in courses that are not immediately equivalent to a Stockton course, yet are from College- or University-level courses from regionally accredited institutions. Credits will likely be applied as "At Some Distance" credits, but as with the current practice, preceptors have the option to complete a degree-audit form to move them to another area on the CAPP.
2. The APC supported the second change which includes allowing a graduate of an accredited county/community college from out of state to transfer their full A.A. or A.S. degree, up to a maximum of 64 credits. This change extends current practices under the "Transfer Articulation Principles for New Jersey Colleges and Universities" and our endorsement of the General Education Foundation for A.A. and A.S. Transfer Programs in New Jersey's Community Colleges to out of state regionally accredited county/community colleges. For both in and out of state transfer students, courses that ordinarily would not transfer individually (e.g., those with grades of C minus or D, or physical education courses) are allowed in transfer as part of the A.A. or A.S. degree. However, minimum grades for specific Stockton requirements still must be met, and acceptance of credits in transfer does not guarantee that those credits will be applicable to the program chosen by the student (as stated specifically in the procedure). In cases where the degree is granted for fewer than 64 credits, only that number will be awarded in transfer.

**Committee Vote:**

**Accept the proposed Undergraduate Transfer Credit Procedure modifications with the suggested amendments.**

Motion made by Robin Hernandez-Mekonnen; seconded by Geoffrey Gust

In favor = 11, Opposed = 0, Abstained = 0

**Charge #5: Course Audit Policy and Procedure**

Tom Grites from the Provost Office submitted a request to reduce the course audit rate. The request came after the end of the academic term, and thus no other APC meetings were scheduled. The APC discussed the request virtually, but did not take a formal vote on the recommendation. The following points were raised in discussion:

1. There is general support for reducing the cost of course audit requests.
2. The drop in rates is substantial, and that may increase requests for audits considerably. Consideration about when audits are permitted (over enrolled courses, open seats only, after drop/add is complete) should be given.
3. Faculty should be able to say no, with no questions asked, to an audit request. Faculty should be permitted to grant or deny permission to audit the course before an auditing student is registered.
4. Consider a cap on the number of audits a student may take each semester and the number of auditing students permitted in one specific course at a time.
5. Consider whether students should be required to complete (audit or for credit) pre-requisites before auditing a course.
6. It was noted that auditing students may affect the classroom environment; it may be difficult for faculty to balance the presence of an auditing student with those paying for the course.

**Additional Business**

**Use of official title for private fundraising**

The Chair of the APC was asked to review the policy per faculty concern about a change in the interpretation of the policy. The policy is a prescribed provision in the NJ State Ethics Commission; it is not an academic or university policy, and we cannot amend it; any change must come from the SEC. The policy is clear that use of official title/university email for private fundraising is not permissible, and all faculty and staff are required to do an online training that the OIDE sends out to become aware of the policy. The rule is long standing. There has not been a change in interpretation; rather, there has been a change in enforcement of the policy. The current office administrators are more diligent about enforcing the policy. It is not ethical or legal to go back to the previous enforcement. Passive charitable solicitation is permitted, and may include posting a sign-up sheet or merchandise in a common area, an employee bulletin board or an electronic "bulletin board," and/or notification via an employee intranet page. Additional options to promote non-university community events may include: Get Involved Day, MLK Day of Service, working with student clubs or organizations on campus; service learning etc.

**APC Blackboard Page**

An APC Blackboard page has been created for committee members. Agendas and documents for review, meeting minutes, and motions are chronicled by meeting date.

### **APC Request for Consideration Form**

To expedite the review process, the APC created a request for consideration form that asks users to provide contextual information about requests, the rationale for the modification/addition, and any intended and unintended consequences that may result. The APC began use of the form immediately after committee approval: <https://goo.gl/forms/VcTpyDDXNaKOzPyE3>

### **Committee Concerns**

#### **Attendance**

The APC is comprised of 17 members, 12 of which are faculty. The other 30% of the committee are non-voting ex officio and student members. Often times, faculty attendance is poor. The lack of faculty attendance compromises the collective voice. As Stockton continues to grow and change, our committee has an increasing number of charges, and these charges are becoming more substantive in nature. It is imperative that the APC be comprised of active and present members so the committee is not dominated by members of the committee who are not faculty. To address this concern, the APC is attempting to move our meetings to outside of the regular 4:30pm meeting module in hopes that there will be less competition with other meetings and work-life balance. It would be helpful to discuss other possible solutions including elected alternate representatives and/or standing committee attendance policies.