Minutes
Academic Standards Committee
February 13, 2009

Present: Debbie Chee, Ken Clark, Roseanne Fish, Wade Hands, Kathy Hummel-Berry, Betsy Kirkpatrick, Martins Linauts, Sarah Moore, Jack Roundy, Drew Shannon, Mike Spivey, Brad Tomhave, Seth Weinberger

Weinberger called the meeting to order at 2PM.

Minutes of January 30th were approved.

Announcements: Shannon announced that ASUPS and students in general were upset with the proposed changes to the pass-fail policy. They do not believe their voices had been heard on the matter.

Report of Petitions Committee: Tomhave issued the following report from the petitions committee:

12 Approved Late Add Petitions
1 Denied Change of Grading Option from Pass/Fail to Graded
1 Approved Change of Grading Option from Pass/Fail to Graded
1 Denied Schedule Conflict
15 Total

Sub-Committee met on 2/5/2009 to deny a petition to change the grading option of a course from Fall 2008 from pass/fail grading to graded. Sub-Committee also denied schedule conflict from student who chose conflict for convenience of a non-academic activity. Prior to the meeting, 3 late add petitions were approved.

Sub-Committee meeting cancelled for 2/12/2009. However, Registrar and Petition Preview Team approved 9 late add petitions and 1 change of grading option petition.

Total Petitions for the Year 09/05/2008 – 02/05/2009
Registrar Approved: 25
Preview Team Approved: 30
Sub-Committee Approved: 40
Total Approved: 95
Sub-Committee No Action: 3
Sub-Committee Denied: 16
Total Petitions: 114
Leading petition issues:

- Late Add – 36 petitions (31.5%)
- Time Conflict – 28 petitions (24.6%)
- Total Petitions: 64 petitions (56.1%)

Continuing Business:

1. The committee turned to a broad discussion of the classroom disruption policy and changes to the document from the previous meeting. Weinberger proposed the following wording:

   Disruptive class behavior is unacceptable. Disruptive class behavior is behavior which, in the judgment of the instructor, impedes the other students’ opportunity to learn and which directly and significantly interferes with class objectives. Should such behavior occur, the instructor is expected to inform the student of the behavior deemed to be problematic and to attempt to work out a solution to the problem. If a solution cannot be reached, the instructor will request the student to leave class and will refer the matter to the Director of Academic Advising. Permission to return to class will be granted only after the student meets with the Director of Academic Advising and signs a contract agreeing to appropriate ameliorative action. If the disruptive behavior continues, the instructor may direct the Registrar to drop the student from the course. Students wishing to appeal an administrative drop for class disruption may do so by petition to the Academic Standards Committee. In such cases, students will continue to be barred from class until the Committee renders its decision.

Roundy noted that there were currently two classroom disruption contracts pending. Weinberger noted that Austin could not be at the meeting today, but that she had sent the following question about the classroom disruption policy:

   I wonder if an intermediary step could be specified – in which the instructor was encouraged to go to Jack before expelling the student from class. In the anecdotal reports, it sounded like this sometimes happened, and that Jack was able to work out compromises.
There was a general discussion of the wording of the disruptive classroom behavior policy, the Austin question, and the issue of “student protection.”

Kirkpatrick raised the issue of student persistence – at what point does Roundy become involved. Chee suggested that the solution should be reached in consultation with Roundy. Roundy suggested the wording should be changed to “the instructor is expected to inform the student and the Director of Academic Advising.” This suggestion was broadly discussed. Comments were made by Kirkpatrick, Roundy, Weinberger, and others. Kirkpatrick noted that the policy focuses on instances of ongoing disruption, but that the instructor should have the option of requiring a student to leave the day of a serious infraction. Chee opened the discussion of the appeal process for the accusation of classroom disruption. Moore noted that the process should be: negotiation, then action, then the possibility of appeal (and that an appeal should not be possible before the action). Roundy indicated that the issue was about institutional due process – noting in particular that the student should not be barred from the classroom without any previous action. Moore noted that the “time frame” was an important issue. Roundy noted that such actions have top priority until they are resolved. Hummel-Berry emphasized that the contract provides a documentation trail. There was some general discussion of characteristics (not specifics) of the two pending cases. Moore argued that expediency language should be explicit in the policy, since Roundy may not always be the person handling the action. Roundy suggested that explicit language about expediency is not necessary, since given the way the policy is worded, all sides have significant incentives to move the process along. After a fairly long discussion involving Clark, Moore, Roundy, Tomhave, Weinberger and others, a consensus emerged that incentives to expediency were sufficient that no specific mandatory time frame needed to be specified in the policy. Finally, Roundy suggested that the word “direct” should be substituted for “request” in the 4th sentence of the policy.

The following wording for the disruptive classroom behavior policy was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously:

Disruptive class behavior is unacceptable. Disruptive class behavior is behavior which, in the judgment of the instructor, impedes the other students’ opportunity to learn and which directly and significantly interferes with class objectives. Should such behavior occur, the instructor is expected to inform the student and the Director of Academic Advising of the behavior deemed to be problematic and to attempt to work out a solution to the problem. If a solution cannot be reached, the instructor will direct the student to
leave class and will refer the matter to the Director of Academic Advising. Permission to return to class will be granted only after the student meets with the Director of Academic Advising and signs a contract agreeing to appropriate ameliorative action. If the disruptive behavior continues, the instructor may direct the Registrar to drop the student from the course. Students wishing to appeal an administrative drop for class disruption may do so by petition to the Academic Standards Committee. In such cases, students will continue to be barred from class until the Committee renders its decision.

2. Following the vote on the disruptive class behavior policy there was some discussion of where the policy should go in the Academic Handbook (hardcopy and online). Moore noted that it was currently listed under registration and that it is not really a registration issue. Chee argued that it should be given its own heading and its own button on the web. The committee instructed Tomhave to identify a suitable location and subheading for the policy in the Academic Handbook.

3. Discussion turned to the question of “outside” advising of majors. This issue – introduced at the previous meeting – concerns the question of whether students could select an advisor from a department/program outside their major as their primary advisor. The problem arises because of the heavy advising loads (more than 30 majors per faculty member) that exists in certain departments/programs. Roundy noted that IPE was one of the majors where this issue had arisen in the past. Spivey suggested that the issue might work itself out over time as the number of faculty in departments/programs adjusted to student enrollment demands. Several committee members noted that the adjustment process for the size of departments/programs is very slow and will not be effective in eliminating the disequilibria (note from secretary-for-the-day: no one used exactly these words, but they said something to that effect). Hummel-Berry argued (supported by Kirkpatrick) that it was unlikely that advisors outside the major would be able to be an effective professional mentor for students. Weinberger questioned how this related to the first-year advising program. Roundy noted that students are generally quite happy with first year advising and “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Moore noted (turning back to the question of advising majors) that the advising load in some departments/programs is a serious problem and that some relief should be found – also suggesting that there were a variety of faculty who would be willing and able to help. Hands noted that in his department the student’s professional mentor does not map one-to-one into the student’s official advisor; certain people in the department specialize in certain professional areas (graduate school in economics, law school, employment, etc.). There was an open discussion
of these and related issues. The committee charged Moore and Roundy with the responsibility of talking to the chairs of “overloaded” departments/programs to see if their faculty were actually interested in finding workable solutions to their advising overload; and if not, then let the advising situation be as it is.

Weinberger indicated that the main topics for next meeting would be the Honor Code Language and the Involuntary Withdrawal Policy.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:54 PM.

Submitted by D. Wade Hands