University Board of Undergraduate Studies  
Minutes of Meeting of November 2, 2016  
1:00 PM in Zilber Hall 470

Present: John Borg, Scott D’Urso, Sara Feldner, Susanne Foster (Chair), Michelle Frederick, M. Behnem Ghasemzadeh, Jill Guttormsen, Michelle Mynlieff, Doug Smith, John Su, Joan Whipp

Reflection: Joan Whipp  
Recorder: Doug Smith

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 PM.

1. The minutes of the October 2016 meeting were unanimously approved without correction or change.
2. Continuing Business addressed the Proposal to Change the Grading System at Marquette University prepared and circulated for comment by John Su, pursuant to the previous discussions of UBUS. Susanne Foster noted the addition of Item No. 4 under Considerations, which would add a new grade of WF. She stated that the Committee on Academic Procedures (CAPS) has requested that such a grade be added because, under Federal financial aid regulations, the US Department of Education must be notified when students receiving federal financial aid stop attending class. Currently, faculty simply impose a grade of F for students upon awarding final grades, or a grade of WA for withdrawal for absences, along with the last date of attendance. This does not facilitate efforts to complete the required reporting process. Also, the University has no way to enforce its withdrawal deadline and still record when a student informs the University that they are leaving a course. Currently, the University must continue to process withdrawal forms and assign a grade of W. The grade of WF will allow Student Financial Aid to determine who failed the course because of non-attendance and it will allow the University to maintain its withdrawal deadline.

Scott D’Urso suggested that a clarification should be made to the proposed language to distinguish the WF grade from the WA grade and to provide that either grade may still be given by faculty after the deadline for withdrawal from the course. This suggestion was received without objection. Michelle Mynlieff indicated that faculty should receive clarification that only the WA grade should be given by faculty before the withdrawal deadline but that the WF grade or the WA grade may be given after the withdrawal deadline. Jill Guttormsen proposed that the following language be included: “Students who choose to withdraw after the deadline will also be awarded the WF grade.” Sara Feldner asked whether other institutions used such a grade, given that the stated purpose for the main provisions of the revised grading policy was to make Marquette’s grading system more consistent with those of other institutions. Susanne Foster
indicated that the only purpose of the WF grade was to make sure that students who are withdrawn or failed for not attending classes are properly reported to Student Financial Aid for further notification to the Federal Government. Sara Feldner then noted that this might be confusing to faculty awarding grades and noted that the WF grade at Purdue University meant that the student was failing and that, unlike the proposed WF grade at Marquette, would not be included in the calculation of the GPA. Susanne Foster noted that institutions used a wide variety of grades and that, except for the plus-minus and GPA numerical calculations, the transcript explanations were intended to address those differences.”

Michelle Mynlieff then proposed that the policy should state expressly that the WF grade is “to be used by faculty after the deadline for withdrawal for students with excessive absences who are also failing the course.” Behnem Ghasemzadeh asked whether should be faculty discretion in the awarding of the final grade. Susanne Foster agreed that faculty discretion should exist, but not if the student withdraws from the course. In response to the suggestion that this would create another form, Susanne Foster also confirmed that the WF grade would be entered in CheckMarq along with other final grades. John Su asked whether the policy should be clarified by saying: “Other grades will continue to exist in their current form.” There was no objection. Jill Guttormsen said that the policy should provide that the WF grade should be awarded if (1) the student quits participating in the course or has excessive absences; (2) the student is failing the course; and (3) the student has not withdrawn from the course prior to the withdrawal deadline. There was no objection.

Michelle Mynlieff proposed that, in light of the extensive discussion, this provision should be withdrawn from the grading policy that had been previously discussed and treated as an amendment. In response to a question from John Su, it was the consensus of the Board that a clearer rationale for the WF grade needed to be included as well. Joan Whipp suggested that it should be a separate policy. Scott D’Urso made a motion to remove section 4 from the grading policy, the section addressing the WF grade, and to address it separately at a future meeting of UBUS. The motion was duly seconded and adopted unanimously, and further discussion of the WF grade was tabled.

With respect to the remaining elements of the grading policy change, in response to a question from Michelle Mynlieff, John Su indicated that the Board of Graduate Studies would be consulted concerning the manner in which grades earned at other institutions that do not have the plus/minus system will be recorded at Marquette. Susanne Foster made a motion to adopt the remainder of the grading policy. The motion was duly seconded and adopted unanimously.
John Su agreed to redraft the WF policy language and to resubmit it. Susanne Foster also noted that the attendance policy will be changed to require faculty to notify of the last day in which a student was in class or the last day in which an assignment was concluded.

3. New business addressed the proposed faculty credentialing policy. Doug Smith noted that the policy was flexible and did not appear to impose anything unique. John Su said that the policy was in response to an issue identified by the Higher Learning Commission during accreditation and emphasizes that more than just a terminal degree is required to be considered qualified to teach. Susanne Foster noted that no such document exists today at Marquette and that, while adjustments need to be made based on discipline, the policy itself imposed only minimal standards. Sara Feldner noted that standards and requirements for each space on the form would have to be developed by each college. Susanne Foster noted that, in A&S at least, the standards and requirements would have to be developed by each department. John Borg asked if the form could be developed online, and Sara Feldner confirmed that it could easily be done.

Michelle Mynlieff noted the requirement at section 3b that, in order to chair a graduate student’s project/thesis/dissertation committee, an individual must “have engaged in active scholarship in the last four years.” She said that, in some fields, such productivity requires having sufficient graduate student support to generate the required data. Doug Smith suggested that this problem could be addressed by replacing the words “more (but not less) stringent” in the second sentence of section 3b with the word “different,” so that individual departments could address this issue in a manner consistent with their discipline. Scott D’Urso suggested that the reference to four years should be deleted. Sara Feldner noted that some time period should be specified. Behnem Ghasemzadeh suggested that “active scholarship as determined by the department or college” should be included instead.

Susanne Foster made a motion to substitute the word “different” for “more (but not less) stringent” in the second sentence of section 3b and to approve the motion as amended. The motion was duly seconded and adopted unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Doug Smith