

5-25-2010

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Wayne and Academic Standards Committee, "The Academic Standards Committee requests a change to the undergraduate Academic Standing Policy" (2010). *Faculty Senate Index*. 66.
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Approved by the Senate: 9/20/2010

Approved by the President: 9/22/2010

The Academic Standards Committee requests a change to the undergraduate Academic Standing Policy

Submitted by Wayne Smith/Academic Standards Committee

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478-1680

5/25/2010

Motion:

The Academic Standards Committee moves that the University Undergraduate Academic Standing Policy be amended to improve ease of understanding, efficient use of university resources and improve student accountability.

Rationale:

The proposed policy is the recommendation of the Academic Standards Committee and will impact the entire GSU academic community: faculty, administrators, and students

Senate Response:

9/20/2010: Stuart Tedders, Chair moved that the motion be untabled. The motion was seconded and the Senate voted to remove the motion from the table.

After reading the motion, Stuart Tedders (JPHCOPH), reviewed what had been discussed at the June meeting of the Faculty Senate. He thanked Wayne Smith and Reed Smith for getting the motion to this point. The committee was charged in 2008 to streamline the Academic Standing Policy and make it less confusing.

The committee was also concerned that the current policy allows students to be readmitted indefinitely, even though there's little or no chance of them actually ever being able to get a degree from Georgia Southern. The committee completed an environmental scan of institutions both in Georgia and outside of Georgia to get some sense of what others were doing. The recommendations contained in the motion reflect that work. There are three basic differences between the current standing, Academic Standing Policy and the proposed policy: exclusions, appeals, and academic intervention.

- Exclusions: under the current policy after the first exclusion students are required to sit out one semester. The new policy states that the first exclusion be extended to one calendar year, as opposed to one semester. For the second exclusion, the current policy states that students will be required to sit out one calendar year. Under the proposed policy the policy would read that students would be required to sit out for five years, with the option of reentering through the USG Policy of Academic Renewal.
- Appeals: Under the current policy there are three total appeals two approved appeals through the Academic Standards Committee, and one through the Dean of the college. The new policy limits this to just one approved appeal from either the Academic Standards Committee or the Dean of the college.
- Academic Intervention: Currently, students with less than thirty hours are referred for academic intervention when their GPA drops to a 1.5 or lower. The new policy requires that students with less than thirty hours be referred to academic intervention when their GPA drops below a 2.0. This policy would be phased in beginning in Fall 2011. The committee believes that the new policy holds the students to a higher academic standard and it addresses the ethical issues by removing students who are unlikely to graduate. An unidentified senator expressed concern that this was a "very drastic change" and that students need to be made aware of the change. The senator argued that, based on his experience, "if the students are excluded for five years, that's not going to make it any better. ...Five years is a long time."

Stuart Tedders (JPHCOPH) agreed that it is a significant change, but "the Registrar's Office has a history of being studentfriendly. The policy is that if students are faced with this option, they would be given an opportunity to be either readmitted or not dismissed from Georgia Southern University."

Wayne Smith (Registrar's Office) added, "There are three other colleges or universities in the University System that have a similar policy to this, including Valdosta State, West Georgia, and also Georgia College and State University." Smith stated that there are concerns about students who are in this situation might decide that they do not want to sit out the five years, but possibly would like to pursue their education maybe at another school. In previous years, the Academic Standards Committee has granted the appeal to be readmitted by students who were on exclusion, so that they could go to another school and enter that other school. Now, most schools will not let them or take them as a student unless they've been readmitted by their previous school.

Rob Yarbrough (COST) requested clarification on the issue of exclusion and the opportunity for an excluded student to attend University System institution. Smith responded that the other school will not take them if they are on a five-year exclusion from Georgia Southern. But if the

current practice continues, where students are readmitted to Georgia Southern with the understanding they would not come back to Georgia Southern but transfer to another school, they would be able to do that right away. This has been happening, especially for those students that might be on a year exclusion from Georgia Southern. Yarbrough expressed concern that this was not in the proposal before the Senate. Smith replied that this “has been a standing policy of the Academic Standards Committee for the last few years.”

Clara Krug (CLASS) asked Smith for additional clarification. “If a student is excluded he/she may not apply for admission to another institution in the University System of Georgia. However, if the student is excluded and then is readmitted through the Academic Standards Committee’s procedures with the understanding that he/she will apply to another institution and not attempt to reenroll at Georgia Southern University, then that student may apply to another institution in the University System of Georgia.” Smith agreed that a student would have to be readmitted to Georgia Southern before being accepted at another system institution.

Teresa Thompson (VPSAEM) stressed the importance of ensuring that the proposed policy be in line with USG Policy. She pointed out that, “[A]t most institutions, you have to have at least a 2.0 to be able to transfer into those institutions. Normally, if we’re taking somebody out for this amount of time, they probably do not have a 2.0, so you’re condemning them either way [as] most [universities] are not going to take you even if it does go with USG rules, if you’re not going to have a 2.0. So, they are really out for five years.” Marc Cyr (CLASS) pointed out that these scenarios involve a student who wishes to transfer their credits and asked about a student who might want a fresh start and did not seek to transfer credits. Smith replied that the student would be in violation of the rules for application and that they would likely be caught through the Financial Aid process. Students must transfer credits earned at a postsecondary institution? Vice President Teresa Thompson pointed out that not revealing attendance at a prior institution amounts to academic fraud.

Marc Cyr (CLASS) pointed out that “One way we can be student-friendly is by not eating up the time and the money for the students when we can be state and taxpayer and financial sufficiency for efficiency friendly by not continuously letting the same people back in over and over and over again on what appears to be a 99.9% guarantee failure.” Based on his experience on that committee, “I think the best, the kindest thing you could possibly do...is to tell that student, ‘This isn’t for you, at least not right at this time.’” Clara Krug (CLASS) asked the Student Government Association representatives for their input.

Alton Standifer (President, SGA) explained that the SGA was concerned that the fiveyear exclusion seemed “drastic,” although they understood that after five years, the student would have a fresh start. They were also concerned that sending a student away “that’s right there on the edge” might be too severe. He stressed the importance of these issues to students and that this “really affects the rest of someone’s life.” Tim Teeter (CLASS) pointed out that the new policy limits the number of appeals. “Five seem[ed] to be a reasonable number” for a student to start with a clean slate. Wayne Smith (Registrar’s Office) reminded senators of the Academic Renewal Policy. Under that policy, “If you are a student at Georgia Southern and you are

excluded where you cannot return and the student sits out for five years [and] doesn't attend another postsecondary institution during that five-year period of time. [When] they come back to Georgia Southern they are starting with a new GPA. Their "A" grades, their "B" grades, and their "C" grades are kept and can be applied toward graduation. Their "D" grades cannot be applied toward graduation." Under the "current Academic Standing Policy, a student cannot be excluded from Georgia Southern and have to sit out four or five years, but if they are out of school four or five years whether they've been excluded out, or they were just on probation, they can do Academic Renewal and do just as I mentioned." Based on the handout and explanation from the Academic Standards Committee, Krug asked if a student has six opportunities to be able to raise his/her average, so as not to be placed on warning, probation or exclusion? Smith confirmed that this was the case and that they could get on approved appeal. Pat Humphrey (COST) explained that the policy calls for students to sit out for an entire year, rather than just a semester, because the semester could be summer. Making it a year would help to have it "sink in." Tedders said that this was consistent with his experience as well.

Rob Yarbrough (COST) asked Smith for clarification on the language in the policy regarding "appeals" and "approved appeals." Smith responded that students can appeal "until they have received an approved appeal." Yarbrough replied that it was possible that students would still have an appeal once they get to the point of the fifth exclusion. Tedders and Smith confirmed Yarbrough's understanding of the process.

Dena Hale (COBA) asked if the policy excludes students from enrolling at : technical schools, like Ogeechee Tech. Smith responded that he did not know.

William Amponsah (COBA) expressed concern that it was unclear when students could appeal. Tedders replied that "students deserve the right to appeal at any time that they are in academic trouble. ...Students have an opportunity to explain basically what went wrong, and what they are going to do to improve. So the standard would be based on the appeal in and of itself and the information that they provided, as well as any underlying circumstances. There are instances where there is a medical [situation] that explains very clearly what went wrong. And that is certainly considered." Smith added, "Currently, the Academic Standards Committee has in place where a student's last two terms, if they're last two terms were 2.0 or better, and they ended up on exclusion that the committee would automatically approve them to come back with the understanding this would be an approved appeal. The student can accept it or deny it. Also any student that is within ten quality points of a 2.0 could also appeal and get an approved appeal."

Don Stallings (COST) asked, "if your goal is to make sure that summer isn't a term that they use, as a term being suspended from school for basically a period of time, why don't we just make it two semesters? It seems arbitrary that we jump from one semester to a full year." Stallings also expressed concern that if a student "was granted an approval, had a 2.0 for two semesters before they basically got kicked out for a period of time, what if the next three semesters, his/her GPA was 3.5, but even with having a 3.5 for the next three semesters, they weren't able to get their overall GPA above 2.0. Would we still send that student home for five

years?" Smith responded to the first question and stated that the one-year suspension was based on the policies of other schools in the University System. Tedders added that "this this proposed change seeks early intervention." Tim Teeter (CLASS) pointed out that, according to his calculations, such a scenario wasn't possible. "If, [following] the example given, a student had two semesters of say a 1.0 and then followed that with two semesters of a 2.0 and followed that with three semesters of a 3.5, they're in no danger of... not being able to stay." He supported the concern, but stated, "if a student starts to excel for three semesters, they are almost certainly going to in fact get to a 2.0." Clara Krug (CLASS) asked if anyone wanted to move to limit the debate to an additional five minutes. James Stephens made the motion, it was seconded and approved. In response to a request for clarification of the flow chart and tables that accompanied the motion from the Academic Standards Committee from Rob Yarbrough (COST), Wayne Smith (Registrar) explained, "In regard to the number of graduates, again, we took almost 3,000 students through this policy of the proposed policy and the number of graduates the difference was, there was going to be, if I remember correctly, about 7 or 8 students that would not be able to graduate from Georgia Southern under the proposed policy that did under the current policy. So it was not a significant number of students that would or, or would not be able to graduate under the proposed policy."

Dena Hale (COBA) stated that she would not be able to make a vote either way, "knowing what options [for attending technical school] are available during the five-year exclusion." Don Stallings added, "The number [of students in this situation] was seven. Even if the number was one, it would still have still been too many." Brenda Marina (COE) asked if the committee had discussed a three-year exclusion. Tedders replied that they had not. Pat Humphrey (COST) stated that, based on her experience, "going from one year to three years as mentioned, wouldn't help anybody. They'd still be coming back under the same hole that they were already in under our current system."

Alton Standifer expressed concern about the length of the five-year exclusion.

Stuart Tedders (JPHCOPH) read the motion again, noting the accompanying documents. "The Academic Standards Committee moves that the University Undergraduate Academic Standing Policy be amended to improve ease of understanding, efficient use of university resources, and improve student accountability." The Faculty Senate then voted and Clara Krug (CLASS) tallied the results: 26 yeas and 10 nays. The motion passed. 6/9/2010:

6/9/2010: Stuart Tedders (JPHCOPH): "The Academic Standards Committee moves that the University Undergraduate Academic Standing Policy be amended to improve ease of understanding, efficient use of university resources, and improve student accountability." Tedders acknowledged the work of some of the committee members: David Rostal (former chair of the committee), Bill Levernier, Mark Yanochik, and Reed Smith. He also acknowledged the help of Wayne Smith and Laura Pallini from the Registrar's Office. Then, he offered background information. The committee was constituted in Fall, 2008.

It's charge was to streamline the Academic Standing Policy and to consider ethical issues associated with the current policy. Under the current policy, students "can be readmitted after sitting out a maximum of one year by completing a former student application, and they can be readmitted with little or no possibility or chance of ever graduating. Essentially, they are placed back into the system where they were, to pick up where they left off." Tedders added that the consensus of the committee that this situation creates "an ethical dilemma." The committee also reviewed policies of approximately eight four-year institutions in the state of Georgia, four or five two-year institutions in Georgia, and approximately eight to ten peer institutions throughout the country before it formulated its recommendation. The differences between the current and proposed policies are outlined below: Exclusions Under the current policy, after a student is excluded the first time they are required to sit out one semester. Many times this semester is the summer semester, and while students are notified, they may not fully understand that they are excluded.

The proposed policy requires that after the first exclusion students must sit out for a calendar year (three semesters). Under the current policy, after the second exclusion, students are required to sit out for a calendar year. They can complete a former student application and be readmitted into the system after that one year. The proposed policy states that after the second exclusion students are required to sit out five years, with the option of reentering the USG System under the policy of Academic Renewal, which allows students to reenter the system (after sitting out) with a clean slate.

The current policy does not do that. Appeals Currently, the policy allows for two approved appeals through the Academic Standards Committee, and one approved appeal through the Dean of the College. The proposed policy requires that this be limited to only one approved appeal, either through the Academic Standards Committee or through the Dean of the College. Academic Intervention Policy Currently, students are referred to Academic Intervention once their GPA falls is at or falls below 1.5. Students eligible for this must have less than 30 hours. Under the proposed policy, students with less than 30 hours are referred for Academic Intervention when their GPA drops below 2.0. The committee recommends that this policy be implemented in fall 2011, with it being phased in, as the adjusted GPA was phased out several years ago.

Tedders said the new policy would be more "streamlined and would hold students to a higher academic standard. It also would address ethical issues by removing students from a system who really have no chance or very little chance of being successful at Georgia Southern." The committee has also presented this material to the Deans Council and to the Georgia Southern University Enrollment Management Council. Rob Yarbrough (COST) asked for an example that would lead to a student's first exclusion.

Tedders answered that it would be a GPA dropping below 2.0. Pat Humphrey (COST) said that the new policy would make sure that the exclusion would "sink in."

Tedders (JPHCOPH) said that the committee thinks that the new policy “strikes a nice balance between institutions that are [very] strict and institutions that are not strict at all.” Fred Smith (LIB) asked about the reaction of the other two bodies to the proposed policy.

Teresa Thompson (VPSA) responded that the reaction was favorable. She clarified that if students who fall below a 2.0 are referred to the Academic Success Center it would “almost double” the number of people that would be coming to the Academic Success Center, which would have a budget impact.” She added that if a student is excluded for five years, it was her understanding that they cannot go to any other USG institution. Pat Walker (CLASS) commented that “it’s painful to see students coming back to that committee over and over and, you can see from their record that they’re not going to be able to be successful here.” Also, since any student who goes to any of the community colleges and maintains a C average is automatically accepted at any University in the Georgia System, some students have low SAT scores and are having real trouble. “Nobody is really intervening and telling them that maybe they need to rethink what they’re doing – that coming to a University isn’t the best option for them,” she said.

Dena Hale (COBA) asked about students that are “stuck in the middle” between East Georgia College and Georgia Southern. Teresa Thompson (VPSA) said she thought there were “some conversations going on as to how we can help East Georgia do some of those support systems with their students.” She said this would be clarified. Clara Krug (CLASS) asked what students thought about the proposed policy changes. Alton Standifer (SGA) said he hadn’t been a part of the discussions, but that he was concerned about the fiveyear exclusion. Michael Moore (COE) Senate Moderator said there hadn’t been time to bring this up with the SGA.

Alton Standifer (SGA) confirmed the SGA had not seen the new policy recommendations. Gary Means (Provost) said the Deans were unanimous in their support for the policy changes and that he thought “the general intent of the policy is valid.” Mark Welford (COST) asked for clarification about the academic renewal policy and the fiveyear wait. Pat Humphrey (COST) moved to table the motion to give SGA a chance to evaluate and give their input as well as to clarify the ramifications of the fiveyear wait. The Senate could bring this forward again, perhaps in September. Motion tabled.

Attachments:

Current Academic Standings

Proposed Academic Standing Appeals Process

Stuart-Proposed Changes to Academic Standing