MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS & GRADING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

5200 North Barton Ave, M/S ML 34

Fresno, California 93740-8014

Office of the Academic Senate ​​​​ Ext. 278-2743​​​​​​

FAX: 278-5745

March 8, 2017

Meeting called to order at 1:02pm

Members Present: Katie Dyer (Chair), Donald Henriques, Doreen De Leon, Steve Chung

Members Absent: Blain Roberts, Luke Pryor, Susan Geringer, Malik Raheem, Xuanning Fu (ex-officio)

1. Consent Calendar
   1. Minutes from meeting of 10/6/16
   2. Agenda for 3/8/17
2. APM 203
   1. K.Dyer submitted to the committee a proposal of revisions to APM 203 based on suggestions from the meeting of 3/8.
      1. The proposed policy retains the suggestions of Kathie Dunbar (who originally made suggestions through strike-out) but reformats the policy into two sections: one for the original special major use (students who want to combine two different majors into one) and one for the newly proposed use (students who are prevented from completing their original major).
      2. Reformatting highlighted some issues that must be addressed:
         1. It is not entirely clear WHO should be allowed to use the new “special major.” One instance is offered as an example, but there is not really a definition.
         2. The policy mentions that both BS and BA are possible as special majors, but there is no discussion on how it is determined which one the special major will be.
      3. D.DeLeon questioned whether we really want to make this change. Doesn’t this violate our charge, which is to maintain academic standards?
         1. Committee members referred to the Graduation Initiative, as a possible force pushing this forward. We agreed that it was a poor reason to relax standards on graduation. In fact, the sentence “It is not intended as a means of bypassing normal graduation requirements” will have to be stricken if the policy is to make any sense. That does not sit well.
         2. At our October meeting, Dr. Fu indicated that Special Major is being used this way anyway, already, albeit very rarely. We were unsure how “rare” that is. Once a year? A dozen times a year? And when it is formalized into policy, will that prompt more students to ask for it as a regular course of action, even if it is rare right now?
         3. Another potential use might be when someone has chosen a degree that is simply too difficult for them, but they are too far along to change their major. Should they be allowed to get a degree, even if it’s not the one they were aiming for? Some members say yes, that if we cut off change of major as an option, there must be some other way. Other members are very uncomfortable with that because students must have the option of failing if a degree is to be meaningful. As a whole, the committee can see both sides. There seemed general agreement that this is theoretically possible that a student might be deserving of a degree, but not the one they originally signed up for, but we are unsure how to maintain academic standards if this policy is enacted. Perhaps we should add something to indicate that this is not a regular offering, it is something that the Dean of Undergraduate Studies can allow under special circumstances, left to that administrator’s discretion.
         4. We could also envision a situation in which a required course is taught by only one professor, but some conflict exists between a student and that specific professor, which might make it impossible for the student to pass the class. This would be a bigger problem than just the one student, if a professor was so unreasonable, but this might allow a way “out” for the student if this kind of situation did occur.
      4. D.Henriques made a suggestion regarding the degree type.
         1. If it is a special major that combines two majors, he suggested that if the degree combines two BS majors, then it should be a BS. But when it combines a BS and BA? We arrived at no conclusion there.
         2. If it is a special major for someone who could not complete their major, then it should assume the status of the degree they could not complete. But not being able to complete might mean that the Special Major degree should resort to the less prestigious option.
         3. K.Dyer suggested that, now that all degrees are 120 units, the distinctions between BA and BS are virtually meaningless at this point. D.DeLeon disagreed, believing that there are still some programmatic differences between the degrees. We could not find evidence to support either position.
      5. K.Dyer will add text to the policy to reflect the BA/BS issue and our concern about professional discretion being used to maintain standards. Proposed changes will be emailed to committee members for approval. Then we will return the policy, with the revisions, back to AP&P. We will note that the issue of BA versus BS is not fully resolved. But we agreed to support the revision, conceptually, so long as the discretion of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies is allowed to remain intact so that this cannot become a default option for students who repeatedly fail classes.
3. New Business
   1. Request from ASI to consider a Final Exam Policy to address two issues:
      1. It is possible for a student to have two exams scheduled simultaneously. Presumably, this is rare, but it is possible. When it happens, there is no policy about which professor should be compelled to find an alternative exam time for the student.
      2. It is also possible for students to have three or four final exams scheduled for the same day of the week. Now, it is suggested that students request their professors to make a change so that they will not be so heavily burdened on one day, but professors are under no obligation to do so.
   2. S.Chung noted that other universities have adopted policies to account for the second circumstance. We should see what those policies look like.
   3. Extended discussion of how it would be possible for a conflict to exist. D.DeLeon located our Final Exam schedule and noted that it does acknowledge the possibility, advising students to approach their professor if a conflict is discovered. This appears to be an issue when a student has a once a week class and a twice a week class.
   4. We will schedule one more meeting this semester to have an ASI rep come talk to us about the details, and to make a proposal.
4. Next Meeting
   1. K.Dyer will email proposed changes to APM 203 in the hope that we can get that back to AP&P as soon as possible.
   2. K.Dyer will send a doodle poll to schedule a meeting for April to address the final exam policy issue.