



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Fourth Meeting
Thursday, December 10, 1981
128, 129, 130 Oakland Center

AGENDA

Respectfully submitted by Keith R. Kleckner for the Steering Committee.

A. Old Business:

None

B. New Business:

1. Motion from the Steering Committee to dissolve the Performing Arts Faculty Council (Mr. Dawson).

MOVED that the University Senate recommend to the President and the Board that the Performing Arts Faculty Council be dissolved, with thanks to those persons who have served on that body during the formative stage of the School of Performing Arts.

First Reading: Debatable, amendable, but not eligible for final vote at this meeting.

Comment: The Performing Arts Faculty Council (PAFCO) was approved by the Senate (February 16, 1978) "to serve as the academic governance authority of the school until such time as a fully constituted organized faculty of the performing arts shall be established." Approval of the Performing Arts Constitution by the Senate and Board and election of a duly constituted Assembly now remove any reason for PAFCO's continuation. The Dean and the Faculty Assembly of the School of Performing Arts recommend its dissolution.

2. Motion from the University Committee on Undergraduate Instruction to modify policy on readmission and change of program (Mr. Coppola).

MOVED that students who are readmitted to the University, or who change from one degree program to another, shall follow the graduation requirements in effect at the time of readmission or change of program. It shall be University policy that all academic units make every effort to allow for whatever work a student has completed prior to readmission or change of program.

First Reading: Debatable, amendable, but not eligible for final vote at this meeting.

Comment: For many degree programs, particularly those of the professional schools, courses and graduation requirements undergo continual evolution in response to changes occurring in the fields. Senate legislation currently in effect concerning graduation requirements does not take into account this evolution. Presently, the graduation requirements for any given student are those stated in the University Catalog extant when the student enters Oakland University (unless the student chooses to be governed by the requirements shown in a subsequent catalog). This motion would require the student who changes programs or the student who has been away from the University sufficiently long to require formal application for readmission (at least a six-year absence under the revised policies adopted by the Committee on Academic Standing and Honors last spring and reported to the Senate on April 16, 1981) to utilize the catalog extant at the time of readmission or change of program (or, again, a subsequent catalog of the student's choice). Students who do not change programs and who maintain reasonable continuity of attendance would be unaffected by this motion. The proposal recognizes the need for the professional schools to keep degree requirements up to date, but at the same time requires as a matter of University policy that maximum flexibility be exercised in the application of the regulation.

3. Motion from the Academic Standing and Honors Committee to eliminate the "N" grade (Mr. Miller).

MOVED that the following changes be made with regard to the "N" grade:

1. The "N," W/S and W/N grades will be eliminated from the undergraduate grading system. A numeric grade of 0.0 will be added to the undergraduate grading system.

Comments:

a) This proposal provides that a student who does not satisfactorily complete a course must be assigned a grade of 0.0. This grade will be averaged in a student's cumulative grade point average.

b) Students who do not officially withdraw from a course in the prescribed manner can no longer receive an "N" or a "WN/WS" grade. Students who would have received these grades will now be assigned a numeric grade.

2. The S/N grade ("Pass/Fail" will be designated by the letters "S/U" (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory)). No numeric equivalent will be attached to either grade.

Comment: This is simply to remove all traces of an "N" grade from the grading system. Present policy with regard to the "S/N" grade; that is, it receives a numeric equivalent of 0.0 in the computation of the Academic Progress Index (API). However, to retain the original purpose of the "pass/fail" course, numeric equivalents will not be assigned to either grade. The designation "S/U" was part of the Oakland grading system from 1965 until it was replaced with the "S/N." With the elimination of the "N" grade it seems appropriate to return to the "S/U" designations.

3. A numeric grade in the range of 0.1 to 0.9 will be added to the undergraduate

grading system.

Comments:

a) These new numeric grades will be considered failing grades. They expand the failing-grade range of motion 1. They will appear on the transcript and they will not count as credit toward a degree.

b) The University Senate approved conversion will read; A= 3.6 - 4.00; B=3.0 - 3.5; C= 2.0 - 2.9; D= 1.0 - 1.9; Failing= 0.0 - 0.9

c) All grades not specifically mentioned in the above articles will remain as they are at present for undergraduates. This is to make it explicit that policies with regard to the S, W, R, and Z grades are unaffected by the legislation.

4. The "I" grade, if not completed by the end of the prescribed time of the term in which a student registers, or "P" grade, if not changed within 2 years of its assignment, shall be changed to a numeric grade of 0.0.

Comment: Present policy is for the "I" grade to revert to an "N" grade if not completed in the first four weeks of the next term during which the student is registered. This article replaces the "N" in this context with the numeric grade 0.0. There is no intent in this article to change the present policy with regard to the assignment of the "I" and "P" grades; nor is there any intent in this article to change the present policy with regard to the completion of the "I" and "P" grades.

5. Undergraduate students who enroll at Oakland University for the first time after the implementation of the legislation shall have their academic standing determined solely by their Grade Point Average (GPA).

Comment: Students who have enrolled at Oakland University before the implementation of this legislation shall have their academic standing determined by past policy. We cannot remove an "N" grade from the transcript. We will, therefore, need to have some means to determine the academic progress of students who have received any "N" grades at Oakland before the passage of this legislation. The easiest way to accomplish this is to continue computing the Academic Progress Index (API) for all students registered at Oakland University before the present legislation takes effect. Implementation effective Fall, 1982.

A report on "[The History and Function of the 'N' Grade and the Rationale for Its Elimination](#)" is attached to each Senator's agenda.

First Reading: This is a five-part resolution designed to be approved or disapproved as a whole. It is debatable and amendable but not eligible for final vote at this meeting.

4. Motion from the Academic Standing and Honors Committee to extend the withdrawal period (Mr. Miller).

MOVED that the period of granting the "W" grade will be extended to 9 weeks in fall and winter semesters and 5 weeks in spring and summer sessions.

First Reading: Debatable, amendable, but not eligible for final vote at this meeting.

Comment: Current legislation allows 7 weeks for the withdrawal period. The intent of this motion is to protect the student when the instructor does not have any data to evaluate the student until the middle of the term. By the time the evaluation results are returned, the 7th week has passed.

5. Nominations from the Steering Committee to vacant seats on the Teaching and Learning Committee (Mr. Miller).

- a) Ms. Jo Ann Pastor, Graduate Assistant in Linguistics, and Mr. Sheldon Appleton, Associate Dean for Advising in the College of Arts and Sciences, be elected to at-large seats on the Teaching and Learning Committee for one-year terms.
- b) Ms. Linda Lentz to replace Ms. Janice Guerriero, who has resigned from the Committee.

Procedural Motion: Debatable, amendable, and eligible for final vote at this meeting.

Comment: The members of the Teaching and Learning Committee, having reflected on appropriate disposition of two at-large seats, recommended to the Steering Committee that one seat go to a graduate teaching assistant, with a term of one year, renewable, and the other go to a person from an academic advising office, an alumnus/a, or someone from the office of Continuing Education, preferably for one-year terms on a rotating basis. Ms. Guerriero has resigned her seat on the Teaching and Learning Committee, citing the pressure of other obligations.

C. Good and Welfare:
Private Resolutions

D. Information Items:
None

E. President's Remarks

HISTORY AND FUNCTION OF THE 'N' GRADE AND THE RATIONALE FOR ITS ELIMINATION

It is the function of the Academic Standing and Honors Committee to "review, propose, and implement policies concerning academic probation, separation and readmission." Traditionally, students are placed on academic probation or separated from the university on the basis of an overall Grade Point Average that indicates "unsatisfactory academic performance." In practice "unsatisfactory performance" is defined as a Grade Point Average below 2.0.

Current university policy with respect to the 'N' grade, however, makes it impossible to use student Grade Point Averages as the sole measure of academic performance. At present two measures of academic performance are employed: the traditional Grade Point Average or GPA, and a second measure, the Academic Progress Index or API. To understand why this second

measure is necessary, and how we propose to eliminate it, it is useful to review the functions and history of the 'N' grade.

A grade of 'N' is currently assigned for two quite different reasons:

1. Students do not attend classes, and do not officially withdraw;
2. The student's graded performance in a course falls below 1.0. (The 'N' grade, in this context, defines "unacceptable" work in contrast with "unsatisfactory" work, which is defined by grades in the range 1.0 to 1.9.)

While 'N' grades may be assigned for 'unacceptable' academic work, they are not used in the computation of the GPA. Thus the GPA is sensitive to 'poor' work (grades in the 1.0 to 1.9 range), but not to 'unsatisfactory' work (the 'N' grade).

The 'N' grade was introduced in the mid 1960s as a record-keeping device to distinguish "failure by reason of absence (to be graded "N") from "failure by reason of unacceptable work (then graded 0.0)." The intent of this distinction was to prevent a seemingly unfair deflation of the GPA for "failure by reason of absence." By contrast with the '0.0' grade, the 'N-for absence' grade was not recorded on the transcript nor entered into the computation of the GPA.

In 1970 the grade '0.0' was removed from Oakland's grading system, and failure "by reason of unacceptable work" as well as "failure by reason of absence" was designated by the 'N' grade. But 'N' grades, now used to indicate 'unacceptable' work, were still not entered on the transcript nor used in the computation of the GPA. As a consequence, failure was no longer a reason for academic probation or separation. In the spirit of the times our grading practice moved us toward the concept of an "open" university.

By 1975, the spirit of the times had changed and with it a change in our grading practice. Academic failure once more became reason for probation or dismissal; however, this was not accomplished by including failing grades in the computation of the GPA. The liberalized GPA remained unchanged, but it was supplemented by a second measure of academic performance, the API. Defined by eight separate sub-articles, the API describes how an excessive number of 'N' grades may result in academic probation or separation. The API is similar to the 'WN' grade in that it is used only for internal auditing, and is not made part of the official transcript of grades.

In 1976 a further complication was introduced when the 'N' grade was distinguished from the 'WN' grade. While both 'N' and 'WN' were to signify 'unsatisfactory performance', henceforth, the 'N' grade, but not the 'WN' grade, was to appear on the student's transcript.. If a student officially withdraws while doing unsatisfactory work, there will be no record of the unsatisfactory work on the transcript. If, however, the student does not officially withdraw while doing unsatisfactory work, this will be recorded on the transcript.

With six years' experience in the use of a double entry system for academic accountability, the Committee on Academic Standing and Honors recommends the elimination of the 'N' grade. The following arguments are presented in support of proposed legislation which is designed to replace the 'N' grade with numerical grades in the range 0.0 to 0.9, and make the GPA the sole measure of academic performance.

1. Although the API has been in use for six years it is neither well known nor well understood. Many students who receive an excessive number of 'N' grades complain that they were not aware that these excesses made them liable for dismissal. In addition, the 'N' and 'WN' grades have differential penalties attached to them? a fact of which many students are unaware, although this has been the case since Fall 1976.
2. Most students and faculty rely on the GPA as the primary measure of academic performance. Since the GPA does not take account of failing academic work, it is particularly susceptible to misinterpretation. Two students may have identical Grade Point Averages, yet if one student has failed a course which the second has passed, there will be no evidence of this difference in their Grade Point Averages.
3. We believe there will be fewer students liable for probation and separation under the new system. In the current system, all 'N' grades count as '0.0' in the computation of the API. An excessive number of 'N's' can thus quickly drop the API below 2.0, the average required to remain in "good standing." In contrast with the grade of '0.0' now associated with failure in the computation of the API, the new grading system will permit the assignment of a range of failing grades, from 0.0 to 0.9. Clearly, a '0.9' grade will do less damage to the GPA than '0.0' does to the API.
4. The transcript is an historical record issued by the university and as such there is a reasonable expectation that it will provide an accurate record of academic performance. When unacceptable academic work is excluded from the transcript, its value as an historical document is diminished.

In conclusion, we believe the elimination of the 'N' grade at this time will have a generally positive effect on the university community. Students will be more aware of the conditions which make them liable for probation and separation. Records will be more accurate, and recordkeeping simplified. Finally, we believe the present legislation will reduce the gap between formal definitions and ordinary judgments with respect to the meaning of "unsatisfactory academic performance."

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