

ANNUAL REPORT: Academic Standing and Honors Committee

During the academic year of 1976-77 the Committee's time was fairly evenly divided between the implementation of the new academic probation and dismissal policy, and review of committee policies and procedures in the areas of appeals, readmissions, and honors. During the Fall Semester, meetings were held on a weekly basis, while during the Winter Semester, meetings were held biweekly. Special meetings of the Committee were held over three day periods to consider dismissal cases at the beginning of the Fall, Winter, and Spring Semesters. The first portion of this report will discuss the various policy reviews that were conducted; the second portion will be devoted to activities associated with the implementation of the new policy.

The review of the appeal process was undertaken because over the past several years it has evolved that most individual cases considered by the Committee have been appeals of dismissal actions. It was hoped that such a review would enable the Committee to achieve a balance between an understanding for the problems of individual students who had violated the policy and a consistency that would achieve a fairness among the entire group of students who had violated the policy. The final result of this review was the Guidelines for Appeals included in this report as Appendix I. These guidelines are not intended to further automate the entire process, but to rather identify the usual procedures and concerns of the Committee. The current process may then be summarized as follows: When the semester grades are processed at the end of the Fall, Winter, and Summer Semesters, all students whose internal transcripts indicate a violation of the academic dismissal policy are promptly notified of their dismissal by the Dean of Student Services. In addition, any students in the Dismissal Option Program who have violated the academic restrictions of that program are similarly notified of the reinstatement of their dismissal. In the dismissal notification, those students who feel that there have been entenuating circumstances in their lack of progress toward graduation are invited to appeal to the Committee. Upon review by the Committee, a recommendation to deny the appeal, rescind the dismissal, or to place the student in the Dismissal Option Program is made to the Dean of Student Services.

The administrative procedures for readmissions were also reviewed by the Committee. This review was occasioned by a desire to develop a more flexible procedure for students who had withdrawn while in good standing from the University and who had been absent for less than one full year. As the number of part-time and evening students has increased, such a student has become more common. For such a student, the Committee recommended that the readmission process be waived (see Appendix II). Upon advice of Vice-Provost Matthews for the Steering Committee, the Senate was informed of these recommendations in the Chairperson's oral report to the Senate at the beginning of the Winter Semester.

The Committee also reviewed its policies concerning Semester Honors and University Honors. The general reason for the review was the pervading reports of grade inflation throughout academia as well as at Oakland. The specific questions were whether the number of students achieving Semester Honors had rendered the distinction meaningless and whether the

varying rates of grade inflation among different academic units provided for an unequal competition for University Honors among the undergraduate students of different academic disciplines. The appropriate data was obtained and presented to the Committee by the staff of the Dean of Student Services. In the case of Semester Honors it was determined that the number of students involved was approximately equal to the number of students placed on academic probation or dismissed by the Committee. In the area of University Honors, records of the previous three years failed to indicate any disproportion of students receiving University Honors in a particular discipline that could be labeled as statistically significant. Because of this, the Committee was unable to find a sound basis for recommending any changes in either of these policies. Indeed, since a loose reading of the Senate's statement on grade point interpretation as stated in the University Catalog supports the inference that the requirements for cum laude are a cumulative A average, the Committee feels that it has little room for maneuver in this area. The soundest basis for all actions of this Committee seems to be to believe that high grades mean good academic performance and low grades mean poor academic performance.

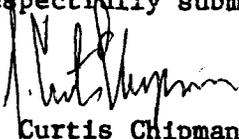
Intermingled with these various policy reviews, a continual concern of the Committee during the past year has been to implement the new academic probation and dismissal policy as smoothly as possible. This has involved frequent consultations with members of the staff of the Office of Computer Services who have been responsible for the development of the new computer system to support the new policy. Their cooperation has been excellent. During the Fall Semester several attempts were made to communicate the new policy to faculty and students alike. Dean Pierson and his staff are to be complimented for increasing the already strong efforts in this area. During the Fall Semester the counseling support for students in the Dismissal Option Program was measurably strengthened. During the Winter Semester, members of the Advising Office personally contacted all students who were assigned to probationary levels of high jeopardy at the end of the Fall Semester.

The numerical results of actions taken at the end of the Fall and Winter semesters are summarized in Appendix III. With regard to its Fall Semester actions, the committee was particularly pleased that all students who had complied with the Committee's instructions had their academic standing finalized before the start of classes for the Winter Semester. Because of the lack of time between the Winter and Spring semester this prompt resolution is still not possible for students enrolled in the Spring Semester; the Committee has attempted to take this into account in considering their appeals. Out of all appeals considered during these two first semesters of the new policy, only 11.7% were rescinded. The rescind action was only taken in cases where the student was found to have not violated the dismissal policy. In a majority of these cases, the errors in the transcript evaluation were due to the student's failure to fill out the necessary form when repeating a course. Hopefully this error rate will be reduced in the future. It is too early to make any statements based on the numbers available so far as to how well the new policy is working. The numbers do indicate that the new policies have not caused any sharp increase in the number of dismissals.

Indeed the only negative feedback that has yet been received concerns the first level of probation for N/WN grades for pre-Fall 1976 students. A student is placed in that category if one N/WN grade has been received and twelve credits of N/WN out of the next sixteen attempted will result in violation of the dismissal policy for N/WN grades. This has been criticized as being unreasonably pessimistic. However, cases do occur of students moving from this level of probation to dismissal in a single semester. Hence the probationary status to indicate the possibility of dismissal at the end of the next semester seems justified.

This concludes my report on the Committee's activities during the past year. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the faculty, students and administrative personnel who contributed to the Committee. I would like to give my special thanks to Dean Pierson and the members of his staff because their day-to-day administration of the policies of this Committee is the most difficult task of all.

Respectfully submitted,



J. Curtis Chipman
Chairperson
Academic Standing and Honors Committee

6/77

Appendix I

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
Office of Student Services

The Committee on Academic Standing and Honors is charged with monitoring a student's academic progress toward graduation. As a result of committee action a student may be awarded University Honors, placed on academic probation, dismissed from the University or readmitted to the University. Because of the potential impact of the actions on a student's academic career, and because there is no higher appeal available within the University of these actions of the committee, provisions have been made for students to appeal committee actions to the committee. These guidelines are intended to provide information about how this appeal process works. It is not the intention of these guidelines to automate the appeal process, but rather to identify those procedures that would be considered normal and, by implication, those that would be considered exceptional. In this manner, final decisions of the committee can hopefully be both consistent and individual.

General procedures applicable to all appeals:

1. The Committee will consider appeals of its actions which result from the awarding of University Honors, academic dismissal from the University, or placing a student on probation. Readmission of students is itself handled in the format of an appeal and as such any action here may not be appealed.
2. All appeals must be made in writing. Appeals may not be made by a personal appearance before the Committee or by verbal communication with a member of the Committee.
3. The Committee must believe that the communication process works. Lack of knowledge of a policy or lack of notification of a resulting action under that policy does not constitute an acceptable basis of appeal.
4. The Committee acknowledges its heavy dependence on the internal records of the University in reaching decisions and recognizes that these records may be sometimes in error. However, since procedures are available for correcting such errors within the University, the Committee must assume that such records are correct unless officially informed otherwise.

Procedures specific to particular types of appeals:

University Honors:

1. The Committee has never made an exception to the basic requirements for University Honors.

Probation:

1. The Committee places a student on academic probation when it feels there is a likelihood of dismissal at the end of the next semester. As long as such a condition exists the student is continued on probation.

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Dismissal:

1. The Committee is unwilling to consider appeals from students who are in the Dismissal Option Program and have had their dismissal reinstated by their violation of the conditions of that program.
2. By policy, no student may be dismissed without being on probation in the preceding semester. Therefore, the Committee expects that a student's appeal will address itself not only to the original semester in which academic difficulty occurred but also to the probationary semester as well.
3. There can be extenuating circumstances which account for a student's inability to make satisfactory progress toward graduation. To sustain an appeal the Committee must be persuaded that:
 - a) the claimed circumstances actually existed and,
 - b) these circumstances were indeed serious enough to be academically debilitating and,
 - c) these circumstances have been brought under sufficient control so as to not pose threat to further academic progress.
4. Whatever the actual reasons may have been for academic difficulty, the Committee is reluctant to continue a student in an academic program that affords him or her little chance of success.
5. The Committee welcomes letters of support and documentation on the behalf of a student appeal. The more that such a letter is addressed to the concerns of the Committee mentioned in 3) and 4) above, the more effective that that letter will be.
6. A student whose appeal is approved but who is still found to have violated the academic dismissal policy will be placed in the Dismissal Option Program. The student who meets the academic and counseling requirements of that program will be continued in that program until good standing is regained. Failure to meet these requirements results in reinstatement of the dismissal action, and no further appeal will be considered.

Appendix II

GUIDELINES FOR READMISSION

1. Students who have withdrawn from the University in good academic standing may return to the University without applying for readmission provided that their absence has not exceeded a full academic year. In determining the length of absence neither the semester of withdrawal or planned return will be counted.
2. Students who have withdrawn in good standing for a longer period of time must apply for readmission one full month before the beginning of classes for the planned semester of return. Such students should submit a tentative plan of study which is consistent with current University expectations of a student with a similar number of credits towards graduation. When appropriate, the student's major department will be consulted.
3. In the case of a student who has withdrawn while on academic probation or has been academically dismissed from the University, a stricter set of procedures will be followed. The Committee feels an obligation to be assured that the student's next period of attendance will be more successful than the last.
4. The Committee is unwilling to consider applications of readmission from students who have been dismissed from the University more than once.
5. A student should initiate his/her application for readmission by requesting an application for readmission at least one month before the beginning of classes for the planned semester of return.

The application will be addressed to the following three major points:

- a) A discussion of the reasons which led to the student's lack of satisfactory progress towards graduation.
 - b) A discussion of how the time of absence from the University has been spent, and how the activity during this time has contributed to the resolution of the past difficulties.
 - c) A statement of goals for the returning student. This statement should include specific academic objectives to be accomplished during the first year back at the University. A detailed course of study should also be included.
6. Following review of the student's readmission application an interview will be scheduled for the student with a member of the staff of the Office of Student Services to further discuss his/her application.
 7. Letters of support which are addressed to the above points may accompany the application and prove useful to the Committee.
 8. A student whose application has been approved will be assigned to that academic standing category that is deemed most appropriate by the Committee for that individual case.

Appendix III

Fall Semester 1976

265 Letters of dismissal sent 12/24/76
156 Appealed
95 DOP
20 Rescind
27 Deny
14 Incomplete Information (I grades), Decision delayed
134 Final Dismissals

Winter Semester 1977

240 Letters of dismissal sent 5/3/77
125 Appealed
73 DOP
13 Rescind
39 Deny
154 Final Dismissals