**Academic Affairs Committee Meeting**

**Wednesday, October 6th, 2021**

**6:00 P.M.**

**Founder’s Room, Bone Student Center**

**Minutes**

**Roll:**

* ***Present:*** Senator Cline, Ex-Officio Hurd, Senator Lahiri, Senator McNab, Senator Nichols, Senator Novotny, Senator Otto, Senator Small, Senator Spranger, Senator Villalobos
* ***Absent:*** Senator Monk, Senator Torry

**Meeting called to order:** 6:00 P.M.

**Minutes from September 22nd**

* No changes or corrections
* Motion to approve: Senator Spranger
* Second: Senator Small
* Motion carried; minutes approved.

**Discussion**

1. Updates
	1. IDEAS Passed
	2. Removal of Title IX item from Issues Pending list was approved by the executive committee
	3. A number of new items (two requiring action and three policies to review) were added to our docket. They will be added to our Issues Pending List
		1. The two new (to the committee) policies to review, one related to student identification (2.1.19) and one concerning classroom disruption (4.1.17), must be done this academic term. The committee agreed to begin with the classroom disruption (4.1.17) policy after the withdrawal policy is done.
2. Review of 2020-2021 external committee reports:
	1. New review: Library Committee
		1. Questions, concerns, edits
			1. Question about the importance and relevance of reviewing these committee reports: Review the work of the committees
	2. Last call on Reinstatement Committee
		1. No discussion
3. Policy 2.1.14 Withdrawal Policy (discussion with Jess Ray, University Registrar), continued
	1. Request from last Academic Senate relating to receiving more information about demographics of students who withdrew from the University and classes:
		1. Financial aid question from last Academic Senate meeting: Students who attend (actively) at or more than 60% of the semester (10 weeks of classes) do not have to pay back their loans; withdrawal before 60% may require repayment.
	2. DEI issues - contact: Doris Houston
		1. Dr. Houston provided some information related to underrepresented groups and frequency of withdrawal. Pell Grant students, first-time students etc.
			1. Biggest concern from a DEI perspective is any action that might extend time to degree.
			2. Little real evidence from the past year at 14 week withdrawal date, except perhaps the number of students who took advantage of the pass/no-pass option.
				1. White students took advantage of the pass/no-pass option more than any other single group, though it was widely used across the student body.
			3. Hispanic/ Black Male retention in Spring 2021increased markedly.
				1. Dr. Hurd believes that this may be due to Covid relief money that helped to stabilize student finances, not the 14 week withdrawal date.
	3. Jess Ray contacted different groups on campus who might be affected by a change to the withdrawal date.
		1. List of offices and their thoughts:
			1. Campus Recreation - no impact
			2. Athletic Compliance - no impact, can work around NCAA rules
			3. Student Access and Accommodation - no impact
			4. Student Conduct and Community Responsibility - no impact
			5. Graduate – Support unifying the deadlines for course/university withdrawal; prefer that the deadline be at least the 10th week
			6. Housing – Prefer the 10th week because that is the last time there is any refund for withdrawing from the University (i.e. they prefer to have more alignment with the refund dates and the actual withdrawal dates). There is concern that a deadline too close to Fall Break might give students the impression that they can withdrawal yet stay in campus housing. The less time between the deadline to withdraw (from class dropping to part time status, or from the University) and the end of the semester, the more complicated it can get for those students planning to return to campus housing the following semester.
			7. Dean of Students - Prefer the 10th week because that is the last time there is any refund for withdrawing from the University (i.e. they prefer to have more alignment with the refund dates and the actual withdrawal dates).
			8. Student Financial Aid - Students who attend (actively) at or more than 60% of the semester (10 weeks of classes) do not have to pay back their loans; withdrawal before 60% may require repayment.
	4. The committee discussed whether polling faculty about the withdrawal deadline would benefit our decision on withdrawal policy
		1. Not feasible in our timeline to poll the faculty this term but the committee agrees that the faculty need to be kept abreast of these changes and encouraged to provide meaningful feedback to students before 12 weeks so students can make informed decisions.
	5. Although some offices on campus advocated for a 10-week, unified deadline, this would mean moving up the current University withdrawal date by two weeks. The committee discussed the pros and cons of this move.
		1. Committee is more comfortable pushing the deadline back
		2. Students often confuse the dates of withdrawal with getting their full money back
			1. There is a clear need for clearer communication with students about this issue, in particular. Rather than giving students lists of policies, the University needs a student-friendly manner to explain the policy and the procedures to follow.
		3. No matter what the committee decides, the financial calendar and withdrawal date will not line up
	6. Committee agrees to unify the deadline
	7. Discussion on date of deadline
		1. UIUC 13th week deadline: what issues do they face? Is there a harm in a later deadline?
			1. No particular issues but functionally UIUC is different.
		2. 10 weeks, you can still help and support the students, 12 weeks is where things get grim for students being able to pull their grades up
			1. Freshman/Sophomore vs. Junior/Seniors
				1. F/SO students withdrawal more frequently, focus on their structure of classes, are more lecture-based rather than discussion-based like J/S
				2. Later date supports their success
		3. 12-week date discussion
			* 1. The committee generally felt that a 14-week withdrawal date was too late and left little time to work through housing and other continuation issues.
			1. The committee agreed that unification of the two deadlines at 12 weeks seems like the best option--keeping University withdrawal date the same but moving class withdrawal back by four weeks.

Next meeting: the committee will work through the written withdrawal policy and begin discussion of classroom disruption policy.

**Meeting Adjourned: 6:50**