

## **Academic Policies Committee: Minutes (8/26/11)**

### **Agenda Items:**

#### **1) Original request for adding M, W morning time slots**

The committee discussed a proposal initiated in the spring of 2011 to allow the scheduling of classes on Monday and Wednesday mornings, with the following potential time slots: 8-9:15; 9:30-10:45, and 11-12:15.

President Sethna provided background information regarding the potential ramifications of this proposal: The USG has expressed concern about UWG's low utilization of room space, particularly on Fridays. Sethna said that UWG's apparent belief in not scheduling Friday afternoon classes is problematic, noting that the assumption has no substantial merit beyond that of social mores. (He cited other USG institutions – Kennesaw included – who have high Friday utilization of classroom spaces.)

Sethna explained that he fears scheduling MW morning classes would drive the institution in the wrong direction, hurting future requests for academic buildings (be they for new buildings or improvements to existing ones). He noted that we have already had a difficult time getting approval for building space as it is.

He went on to urge the committee that if we are to pursue the proposal further, we balance the request by offering “innovative” class scheduling, such as perhaps WF classes or even Friday classes scheduled in three-hour blocks. Doing so would not only improve classroom utilization on Fridays, but it would also lessen potential scheduling conflicts for classrooms on MW mornings (as evidenced by the current scheduling challenges on TTR mornings).

The committee then discussed potential options for scheduling, including the following:

- To lighten the crunch on classroom space for MW mornings, departments should be allowed to dictate their MW schedules for classrooms they control (as opposed to shared classroom space, such as TLC rooms); departments could also have flexibility with respect to “innovative” scheduling (like opening a 3-hour block on Fridays).
- Most College of Education classes are already scheduled for once a week in three-hour blocks to accommodate student teaching schedules, so this would serve as an existing successful example of such scheduling blocks.
- Math and Foreign Languages prefer MWF classes for pedagogical reasons.
- History had previously requested a 3-hour block in the afternoons and was previously denied (perhaps because of space – reason was unclear); nonetheless, HIST could easily schedule 3-hour blocks on Fridays.

- To avoid potential problems down the line (with respect to poor room utilization), departments could balance MW morning classes by increasing the number of Friday or WF classes.
- Increasing the number of Friday classes offered might also negate the (problematic) perception of UWG as a commuter institution.

President Sethna's bottom line, essentially, was that the committee be cognizant of how this potential scheduling move would "play" with the USG, as we rely on funds from that source for building improvements. He also asked the committee to agree to re-visit the proposal if, after a year of implementation, scheduling MW am classes does, in fact, hurt Friday classroom utilization.

The committee ultimately agreed to the following plan:

- Rob will draft a message to the deans soliciting their input; the committee will postpone its vote until the chairs have offered feedback.
- In the meantime, committee members will discuss the issue with colleagues.
- Rob will also discuss with the deans a proposal that departments be allowed to add a three hour block for next semester only as a late addition (as spring schedules were due this afternoon).
- Committee will also wait for feedback before bringing the proposal (which we'll draft at our next meeting) to the Senate (at its meeting scheduled for 10/14/11).

## **2) Dean Mbaye's request for modifying the language regarding transient student status**

Dean Mbaye contacted the committee over the summer regarding discrepancies in the undergraduate catalogue with respect to transient status. The discrepancy ultimately lies in the current policy's stipulation that students must "have a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher at West Georgia" in order to take classes at another institution, but at the same time, a student with a GPA lower than 2.0 may still be considered in "good academic standing" at UWG. The problem is, therefore, that some students who are technically in good academic standing may not be allowed to take classes as transient students.

This proposal led to a discussion of larger concerns with respect to transient status, primary among them the fact that many students take courses at other institutions that don't transfer back to UWG (or they attempt transient hours at institutions that aren't properly accredited). The question then became about who should bear the burden of verification – should advisors have to do the background work to verify that courses will, in fact, transfer? (Someone noted that there could be a problem of advisors signing off without properly researching first.) Wanda Eidson stated that the registrar's office simply does not have the personnel resources to do the research and sign off on every potential transient student's paperwork.

The committee ultimately decided to ask Donna Haley (a member of the AP committee who wasn't present at the meeting) for suggestions regarding how to correct the problem (with the general consensus leaning toward perhaps letting students shoulder that burden).

The other issue that Wanda raised concerning transient permission was with respect to the timeline – what should happen if a student is granted transient permission, but his or her academic standing changes between the semester of approval and the semester at another institution? The language of the current policy allows for some students to slip between the cracks in that context.

The consensus of the committee was that the policy needs more specificity, something along the lines of, “The student must maintain good academic standing during the term of his or her transient coursework.”

Ultimately, the committee agreed to also table this item as well until Donna returns.

#### **Future meeting dates and times:**

The committee agreed to meet on the final Friday of each month at the same time (2:00) and most likely in the same place (Adamson 127). In light of the Thanksgiving holiday, the committee decided to meet on the Friday before Thanksgiving – November 18<sup>th</sup> – at 2:00. The committee set this schedule for the duration of fall semester only, with the intent of re-evaluating meeting dates and times in the spring.

NOTE: On 8/30, Rob sent out an email requesting that our October meeting be scheduled for Friday, October 21<sup>st</sup> (as opposed to Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup>).