

Academic Affairs Committee—February 20, 2018

Present: Sandy Maisel, Steve Saunders, Loren McClenahan, Katie Donahue, Beth Schiller, Barbara Moore, Marques Houston, Adrienne Carmack, Sam Scott, Russ Johnson, Jim Sloat, Dale Kocevski

I. The minutes from the February 13, 2018 meeting were approved.

II. “Incomplete” grades

This issue was brought to the committee based on a conversation at the February Chairs and Directors meeting. Department chairs noted that there are no concrete guidelines regarding when it would be appropriate to grant a student’s request for a grade of “Incomplete”. They were concerned about inconsistency between faculty members in the standards used for granting an Incomplete, and concerned that sometimes it is not in the best interest of the student to be granted an Incomplete. The chairs and directors have referred this matter to the AAC, requesting that the committee consider the adoption of some more specific guidelines. Beth presented some data to the committee, indicating that the number of Incompletes has been increasing in recent years, with 134 Incompletes (a new record) in the fall 2017 semester.

One possible approach might be to have a guideline stating that faculty members should grant an Incomplete if a student is facing (something like) “significant illness or critical emergency”. Faculty members could also be encouraged to consult with a student’s academic advisor and class dean during the process of considering whether to grant an Incomplete. After a brief discussion, the matter was tabled, and will be brought up for further consideration at a later meeting.

III. Report on Grading for the March Faculty Meeting

The committee then turned its attention to preparing a report on grading for the March faculty meeting. This report will include information showing the recent (upward) grading trends and the stark differences between departments and programs, followed by a set of recommendations. It was agreed that the information should include a colorful table on college-wide letter grade distributions from 2001 to 2015, and a graph showing the difference between departments (with the division of each department indicated but not the department name). We will also mention the trend toward higher grading by newer faculty members, in 100 level courses, and in Jan Plan courses.

Our recommendations will be:

- 1) A set of grading guidelines
- 2) a proposal for the provost’s office to provide annual grading reports to each department.

The committee spent some time revising the wording of the grading guidelines. The specific language for all aspects of the report to the faculty will be reviewed and formalized at the next meeting.