

MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS & GRADING SUBCOMMITTEE OF  
THE ACADEMIC SENATE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO  
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October 6, 2016

Members Present: Katie Dyer (Chair), Blain Roberts, Donald Henriques, Steve Chung, Xuanning Fu (ex-officio)

Members Absent: Doreen DeLeon, Malik Raheem, Luke Pryor

Members Excused: Luke Pryor, Doreen De Leon

Meeting called to order at 2:05pm

1. Agenda approved, with the change that APM 203 becomes item #4 instead of being listed as an announcement, which was in error.
2. Introductions – members present went around the table to introduce themselves
  - a. Members described the interest in this committee.
  - b. Several members noted that it was the only committee they could get on, and that they have never created the agenda, it was given to us by others.
  - c. K.Dyer indicated that she would like for this committee to take some initiative on the issue of grade inflation. The push toward increasing graduation rates introduces the possibility that faculty will have to safeguard against a perceived push toward more grade inflation if we are to maintain the integrity of our academic standards. Maybe we need to take a position, or investigate, and be ready to advocate for maintaining academic rigor.
3. X. Fu entered the room at this point, and raised the following issue. A Chancellors Office memo has requested that Fresno State clarify how course articulation should work when students bring units from universities that offer +/- grading, since we do not. Essentially, should we accept C- grades as passing? Currently, we do, because we ignore the + and - on any grade. To convert to GPA, it counts as 1.7 points. If Fresno State is to consider +/- grading, that move would come from this committee.
  - a. S. Chung noted that +/- is more work for faculty.

- b. B. Roberts noted that it would be likely to add to grade grubbing, which is already enough of a problem.
- c. K.Dyer opined that grades are too “squishy” for +/ - to be meaningful. It would imply more specificity in grades than are really accurate.
- d. X.Fu thanked us for input about that, but asked how we feel about accepting C- grades?
- e. B.Roberts said that we’re crushing all the +/ - grades into one, so this seems appropriate. Right now, since we don’t use C-, a 70% of 71% counts as a passing grade, so why shouldn’t it be passing for a transfer student as well? What we are doing currently seems to be the most consistent.
- f. K.Dyer noted that, while a C- is passing, it doesn’t count for as much in the GPA. So that if a student got C- in every single class, they would not have a good enough GPA to come to Fresno State. So there is already that constraint built in to restrict the “barely scraping through” students. That’s probably enough.
- g. D.Henriques observed that different disciplines might see this differently.
- h. S.Chung agreed, but said we should set a standard that the whole university follows, not allow that kind of variability.
- i. Members resolved to consult with their colleagues and report back if we have a change of mind. But as it stands, we don’t want +/ - grading, and we agree with the current system of allowing C- grades to articulate as passing.

4. APM 203 – Special Major for a BA Degree/BS Degree

- a. The AP&P asked our committee to review proposed changes to this policy. Kathy Dunbar drafted the changes.
- b. The Special Major was designed for students who come into the University knowing that they want to do something “special” that does not currently fit under a specific degree. They can set up a set of requirements in advance, and then complete them. But the special major is regularly used for students who do not complete the requirements of the major they signed up for, and cannot meet them, but who have too many units to change majors. We want to help graduate with something, because they have invested so much already, and we have invested so much in them already. So this a proposal to revise that policy to make that an explicit use of the Special Major.

- c. Some language has been added to specify circumstances under which the latter use might be appropriate.
- d. Committee members are supportive of the aim of revising the policy.
- e. However, we noted that the requirements are absolutely incompatible between the two uses of special majors. Eg. The requirements include that the major must be established at least one full year before graduation. But that is not possible under the second use.
- f. We proposed changing the policy to say that there are two uses of the Special Major, and to list requirements of the two uses separately, rather than trying to lump them together like this.
- g. K.Dyer will write a draft and bring to the next meeting for review.

5. Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00.