

Academic Standing Committee
Minutes of the Meeting on September 18, 2023

Present: Lilla Toke - English (Chair), Caterina Almendral - ELA, Dionne Miller - Academic Affairs, Michael Napolitano - Business and Technology, Kyle Hollar-Gregory - Social Sciences, Ana Mora - Wellness Center, Andrew McFarland - Humanities, Erika Correa – ACE, Renee Daniels – Admissions, Abdul Hashim – Registrar

Excused: Alexandra Rojas - Library

Meeting Start Time: 2:30 PM

Meeting End Time: 4:15 PM

The chair welcomed old and new committee members.

Approval of May 2023 Meeting Minutes

The Committee reviewed, updated, and approved the April 2023 meeting minutes by a vote of 6 – 0 with no amendment.

1. Plans for 2023-2024 Academic year

The committee discussed the following agenda for the academic year:

A. Governance Plan Review:

- The committee will discuss the current composition of the Governance Plan, noting that the Director of Admissions and the designee of the Vice President of Academic Affairs serve as ex officio members without voting rights. There was consensus that this arrangement is unfair, given that all members contribute equally to discussions. It was proposed to amend the Governance Plan to grant voting rights to all committee members. The committee will discuss and make a decision about this issue at their November meeting.

B. Academic Integrity Policy Amendment:

- The committee will deliberate on the need to update the Academic Integrity Policy in the college catalog to include AI-related language. This consideration arose from recent changes made by CUNY in their policy, which may not be widely known. The committee decided make changes to the Academic Integrity policy.

C. Academic Forgiveness Policy Modification:

- Committee members will discuss a suggestion, initially proposed by the registrar, to revise the Academic Forgiveness Policy. The proposed change involves reducing the waiting period for students to apply for academic forgiveness from five years to three. The committee expressed interest in exploring this modification further.

D. Online Learning Policies:

- An update on the progress of researching and formulating online learning policies was provided. Further discussion on this topic is anticipated in future meetings.

E. Withdrawal Policy Evaluation:

- The committee expressed concerns last year about the potential impact of non-punitive withdrawal grades (W and WU) on students' academic progress and financial standing. The possibility of an increase in withdrawals was considered, given that students can withdraw until the last day of classes. Data was requested from Institutional Research to assess the situation.
- At the meeting the chair presented preliminary data indicating that there has been no significant increase in the number of W grades post-2021 policy changes. GPA averages also showed minimal variation. However, it was noted that students with even one WU grade tend to have a GPA below the required threshold for graduation, which raised concerns.
- Members suggested asking for more data, specifically considering the percentage of students affected. It was agreed that proportionality is crucial for a comprehensive assessment. Additional data, specifically the GPA averages before and after the policy change, will be requested for a more detailed analysis.

F. Consideration of A+ Grade Option:

- The inclusion of an A+ grade option was raised for discussion last year and will potentially be addressed this academic year.

G. Student-Facing Website Section:

- The committee acknowledged the importance of creating a student-friendly section on the website, dedicated to policy-related materials. Further efforts will be made to develop and implement this section. In particular, it was suggested to incorporate informational videos on the website to enhance accessibility and understanding of policies for students.

2. Revision of Academic Forgiveness Policy

Current Policy Overview: The existing academic forgiveness policy allows students who were dismissed or have been away from the college for at least five years, with a GPA below 2.0, to seek reinstatement. Under this policy, previous failing grades are retained on transcripts but not included in GPA calculations.

Proposed Change: A committee member initially proposed reducing the waiting period from five years to three years. The rationale behind this suggestion was that a three-year wait would likely foster a stronger connection between the student and the college compared to the five-year period. Members also cited that other colleges have implemented similar changes.

New Suggestion for Further Reduction: Some members advocated for an even more significant reduction in the waiting period, proposing a two-year timeframe. They argued that two years would still allow students sufficient time to reevaluate their situation and return to the college.

Concerns About Maturity and Reflection Time: Other members expressed concerns about whether a two-year waiting period would afford students enough time for personal growth and reflection. They pointed out that some students may need more time to fully understand their previous academic challenges.

Consideration of an Interview Process: There was discussion about potentially implementing an interview process for reinstated students. The purpose of the interview would be to assess the student's readiness to return and succeed academically. However, there were reservations about the feasibility and logistics of conducting such interviews.

Financial Aid Implications: It was clarified that reinstated students usually have to pay out-of-pocket until they meet the minimum GPA requirements for financial aid eligibility. This provides an additional incentive for students to perform well academically upon their return.

Request for Data and Comparative Analysis: Participants emphasized the importance of gathering data to inform the decision-making process. Specifically, they requested information on the number of students affected by the policy, the outcomes of those who were reinstated, and any trends related to student transfers to other institutions.

Consideration of Policies at Other CUNY Colleges: It was suggested that researching the academic forgiveness policies of other CUNY colleges could provide valuable insights into best practices and potential benchmarks for LaGuardia Community College's policy.

Members acknowledged the need to carefully consider the potential impacts of any changes to the existing policy. The final decision on the policy change was deferred until more detailed data and comparative analyses could be obtained.

3. Yearly Policy Workshop

The committee addressed several key points regarding the upcoming policy workshop. One significant proposal was to shift the workshop date from October 16th to October 23rd. This adjustment aims to better accommodate the schedules of new faculty members, who are a crucial audience for the workshop. In light of the ongoing pandemic, the committee decided to continue the practice of recording the workshop sessions. These recordings serve as valuable resources, accessible to the wider college community through the ASC website. The focus this year will be on updated policies, with particular attention to the recently revised attendance policy.

Recognizing the importance of engaging with new faculty, the committee made plans to participate in the Center for Teaching and Learning's new faculty seminar. This presents an excellent opportunity to introduce the committee's role and emphasize the significance of the upcoming workshop. The committee has a personalized letter ready for distribution to new faculty members, providing them with essential information about the workshop.

Additionally, there was a thoughtful consideration of which policies to highlight during the workshop. The new attendance policy emerged as a crucial area, given recent changes. The discussion expanded to encompass broader policy areas, such as academic integrity, grade policies, camera usage, and the integration of artificial intelligence. These are all critical aspects that may be influenced by policies set forth by CUNY. To ensure clarity and accessibility, the committee emphasized the need to centralize departmental attendance policies. Each department will be encouraged to work on their attendance policies, and a master document will be established for easy reference. Committee members also agreed to revise and update some of the recording for the workshop. An email will go out to the college community about the workshop in the next couple of weeks.

4. New Business

The issue of a Transfer Appeals Committee was raised, which serves as a resource for students seeking to transfer courses that fulfill university transfer requirements. The discussion then shifted towards the concept of a transfer appeals process, specifically for students facing denials when attempting to transfer a specific course. Members expressed their unfamiliarity with this process and emphasized the need for further investigation. The committee acknowledged the varied approaches students take when dealing with transfer issues, highlighting the importance of establishing a clear and consistent process. It was proposed that the effort to create a transparent transfer appeals process should involve collaboration with the Provost and department chairs. Once a proposal is solidified, it can be seamlessly integrated into the catalog's section on transfer policies.

Concerns were raised about changes in the process for reporting instances of academic dishonesty, in light of the upcoming workshop. Given a recent retirement, there is currently no designated Academic Integrity Officer. Attendees were informed that Student Affairs is actively working on hiring a replacement.

Committee members generously volunteered to take on specific tasks to move the committee's initiatives forward. This included reaching out to Institutional Research (IR) for necessary data, addressing the new faculty seminar, and creating invitation letters for the upcoming workshop.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Lilla Toke
Chair and Representative – English