

Faculty Senate Meeting

October 7, 2015, 2:30 PM to 5:00 PM

Butler Board Room

- 1) Chair's Report – Larry Engel (2:30 PM)
 - a) September 9, 2015 Minutes Approval
 - b) Ad Hoc Grade Inflation Committee
 - c) Changing Class Schedules
- 2) Provost's Report – Scott Bass (2:40 PM)
- 3) Student Leaders & Sexual Assault Working Group SAWG on Freedom of Expression – Sasha Gilthorpe (3:00 PM)
- 4) Undergraduate Regulation – Lyn Stallings, Doug McKenna & Rob Hradsky (3:40 PM)
- 5) Term Faculty Associate Promotion/Outside Letters – Steve Silvia (4:40)
- 6) For the Good of the Order

Minutes

Faculty Senate Meeting

***** The complete recording for this meeting can be found at <http://www.american.edu/facultysenate/agendas-minutes.cfm> Sep 9, 2015**

<http://www.american.edu/facultysenate/agendas-minutes.cfm>

Present: Professors: Larry Engel, Todd Eisentadt, Lacey Wootton, David Banks, Kyle Brannon, Rachel Borchardt, Chris Edelson Maria Gomez, Olivia Ivey, Kelly Joyner, Billie Jo Kaufman, Despina Kakoudaki, Iris Krasnow, Joshua Lansky, Gwanhoo Lee, Jun Lu, Mary Mintz, John Nolan, Andrea Pearson, Steve Silvia, Chris Simpson, Kate Wilson, Brian Yates, Provost Scott Bass and DAA Mary L. Clark.

Professor Engel called the meeting to order at 2:40 PM.

Professor Engel welcomed all new and returning members to the Senate and expressed his honor to serve as chair. Professor Engel reminded all senators of some small meeting operation details, and each member introduced themselves for the record.

Minutes Approval – Larry Engel

Professor Engel introduced the minutes from the May 13, 2015, meeting and opened the floor for discussion. No discussion was needed and the Senate **VOTED** and approved the minutes 23-0-0 in favor.

Chair's Report – Larry Engel

Nominations for At-Large and Additional Senator for the Executive Committee

Professor Engel stated that the Executive Committee selected John Nolan and Andrea Pearson to be the at-large and additional senator representatives for the Executive Committee for AY 2015-2016. He asked if there were any other nominations or self-nominations for these seats.

Professor Chris Simpson said that he was concerned about the transparency of the operations of the Executive Committee and would like the senators to be more informed about such decisions like selection of Executive Committee representatives prior to arriving at the Senate floor for a vote.

Professor Engel stated that he takes Professor Simpson's comment "to heart" and feels that the current procedure could be changed to be a more transparent process.

Professor Wootton stated this would involve a change to the by-laws since the change is part of the role of the Executive Committee's responsibility. She stated she is open to this suggestion, but the membership of the Senate in May is not the same as it is when the Senate returns in the fall. Should the selections be made from the old Senate membership or the new membership? Professor Wootton stated that she would be happy to address the issue and asked for suggestions to be emailed to her as well as for Professor Simpson to send some possible suggestions he might have to assist in making this change.

Professor Engel asked the Senate to vote on the current nominees, John Nolan and Andrea Pearson, and the Senate **VOTED** in favor 21-0-2.

Grade Inflation

Professor Engel stated that a Grade Inflation Committee is being formulated and that he is looking for volunteers from the Senate. Currently we have representation from three units, ex-officio members from CTRL and the Vice Provost's Office, specifically Lyn Stallings. Professor Engel requested the senators to email him if they would like to serve.

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Search – Lacey Wootton

Professor Wootton informed the Senate of Vice Provost of Undergraduate Studies Lyn Stallings return to the classroom at the end of the academic year. She stated that she will be chairing the search committee and that she hopes to have the search completed in early spring.

Provost's Report – Scott Bass

Provost Bass stated that the enrollment for the first-year class is slightly over the record number from last year. The yield is way up, and the campus is flooded with triples. Additionally, he stated:

- More money was moved from merit scholarships to need-based scholarships. This year 80% want to need.
- Other campus demographics remain largely stable.
- Graduate numbers were not met overall, but the budget will balance; some schools did meet or exceed goals.
- Current dean searches include WCL, KSB and School of Education.
- General Education program changes are underway and will be brought to the Senate soon.
- Leads with graduate students are good but finalizing them has been difficult.

Dean of Academic Affairs Term Faculty Salaries Report – Mary L. Clark

Dean Clark stated that she has had discussions with the Senate and the ad hoc Term Faculty Committee about how the university might improve compensation to be more competitive for term faculty. She stated that led by the Provost, during the most recent budget cycle, a commitment to increase the lowest salaries had been approved, and allocations began during the September 2015 merit increase period. The majority of the allocations this year have been dispersed to the most underpaid. This process will take a total of \$1.6 million to reduce the gap involving the lowest salaries, and she stated the administration is optimistic that additional funds will be provided in the next budget cycle to complete the task of raising the lowest salaries.

High Impact Research Report – Jon Tubman

Vice Provost of Graduate Studies and Research Jon Tubman stated that he would begin by going over the process the committee went through and their goals, followed by answering any questions.

VP Tubman stated the following:

- The overarching question the committee addressed in this report was, “What can the university do to assist AU faculty to communicate and disseminate the results of their research, scholarship, and creative activities?”
- The major themes of the report are translating scholarship to outside audiences, disseminating scholarship, and best practices for fostering high-impact research.
- The overall benefits the committee saw include enhancing the university’s national reputation and faculty career trajectories, and attracting new faculty and well-qualified students.
- The committee also discussed incentives for faculty, existing campus resources, additional resources, and communication and media strategies.

Professor Wootton asked what the committee expected the role of the Senate to be after this presentation.

VP Tubman stated that one important issue that would be a place for the Senate’s input is to look at how a faculty member is rewarded for his or her high-impact research and the role of a public scholar. These are not written into the tenure and promotion guidelines or any metrics for annual raises.

Professor Engel stated that the current document requests input from the Senate on “recognizing the importance of public voice, media, outreach.....in the standards of tenure and promotion” and this could be a starting place for the Senate.

Professor Mintz proposed a motion to refer the report to the CFA and ask them to review the referenced section mentioning promotion and tenure and possibly make a possible recommendation to revise language.

Professor Engel called to question the proposed motion to refer the 2 paragraph on page 4 in the High Impact Report to be sent to the CFA for review and possible recommendation. The Senate **VOTED** and the motion was approved 20-2-1.

Professor Engel stated that the report was presented informationally and is not being presented for an overall vote.

Freedom of Academic Expression Resolution – Larry Engel

Professor Engel stated that the Executive Committee has crafted language that has been brought forward for the Senate's approval. He then asked the Provost to give the senators some background.

Provost Bass stated that historically universities are a pivotal institution for accommodating different voices, but over the last several years there have been incidents that are troubling to the notion of academic freedom. He stated that "AU is still an institution where ideas flourish and even ideas that may be found repugnant can still find ability to be voiced." This has been an issue at many campuses. The primary issue that faculty are seeking is guidance on where the university stands on issues of intellectual freedom in the classroom. AU wants to ensure that faculty at AU have the freedom and the full understanding to express points of view that students may find uncomfortable.

The Senate discussed the document and made several friendly amendments. The Senate **VOTED** and the document was passed unanimously 23-0-0.

Senate Committees' Annual Reports for 2014-2015

Committee on Learning Assessment (COLA) – David Banks

Professor Banks stated that COLA worked with many units on learning assessment. The main initiatives were 1) collection and review of assessment reports, 2) strategies for mapping curriculum and 3) ways to enhance knowledge and assessment of institutional outcomes. He stated that COLA will continue to work on ways to support the faculty community to improve student learning.

Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) – Maria Gomez

Professor Gomez stated that the committee was successful in completing a two-week turn around (or less) for reviewing proposals. From summer 2014 to the present, the UCC reviewed a total of 76 proposals.

Graduate Curriculum Committee – Jun Lu

Professor Lu stated that the GCC reviewed 64 proposals. The committee was able to meet the two-week turn around except for one proposal that needed revisions. The committee worked over the summer to review approximately 10 proposals.

Committee on Information Services (CIS) – Chris Simpson

Professor Simpson stated that CIS worked on submitting budget recommendations concerning communication and information services for faculty. CIS participated in the Social Media Policy recommendation, worked to add photo' to class rosters, advocated for access for people with disabilities to the AU computing and information services, and made recommendations to the AB&B committee to submit for budget consideration.

Committee on Academic Budget and Benefits (CABB) – John Douglass

Professor Douglass stated that CABB started the review of reports for the budget cycle, which included review of tuition and room and board expenses and term faculty salaries, and CABB was able to meet with CIS to discuss technology recommendations. The guidelines that CABB submitted were approved by the BOT; however, due to budget constraints the committee presented a list of suggested requests to the President for consideration. CABB, along with the University Benefits Committee, reviewed the dental and health plans, and increases to Carefirst, Kaiser and Delta Dental are anticipated in the next cycle. The committee also participated in the language changes to the *Faculty Manual* Section 25, Pg. 68 Early Retirement Incentive.

Committee on Faculty Actions (CFA) – Steve Silvia

Professor Silvia stated that the CFA reviewed a total of 58 files. The CFA additionally fulfilled the five-year review of the Promotion and Tenure Guidelines for all units except the Washington College of Law.

Committee on Faculty Grievances (CFG) – John Douglass

Professor Engel stated that he needed to inform the Senate that since we audio record Senate meetings, discussion of this report and its recommendations may become part of ongoing litigation; further, if we form a committee as recommended by the CFG, those members who serve on it may also become part of the litigation and could be deposed. Lastly, since the case is currently in litigation, it seems that an investigation is already underway, and the Senate should wait for this outcome before addressing the concerns of the report.

Professor Douglass stated that the committee worked very hard and takes seriously the cases brought before it. While the committee is considering the cases, they meet weekly for one hour. All cases are handled with confidentiality. This year the committee reviewed two cases that both received positive reviews from all previous evaluations and external reviewers but were denied tenure by the Provost. Both reports were sent forward to the President. Professor Douglass stated the committee has asked him to read the following statement: “The pattern of positive evaluation except at the last level raises concerns. If junior faculty are advised by senior faculty and follow guidelines established by their academic units approved by the Provost but are denied tenure on the basis of criteria not known to the parties involved, then the tenure process is not transparent. If the recognized guidelines are not adhered to, then tenure decisions appear to be arbitrary, and can only harm AU’s reputation among prestigious reviewers at other universities and among academics at large.”

Professor Douglass stated that the committee was charged by the President in reference to one case to investigate the discrimination charge, which turned out to be the charge of the committee. The committee asked for additional information, and some was received from the DAA, and the committee found a possible pattern that in some cases women and relatively older scholars are denied tenure at a significantly higher rate than males and younger candidates. The small number of cases that the committee could view were not that conclusive, so the CFG is recommending that the problem is serious enough that the Faculty Senate should consider a full-scale investigation. Dealing with the same grievances, they also looked at the language for the committee in the *Faculty Manual*, but after talking with the DAA Mary Clark, the committee feels that most of the recommended changes would not be approved by the Board of Trustees. The CFG feels they need clearly spelled

out procedures in the *Faculty Manual* on dealing with equity issues involving the Office of the Provost. They do not propose that it be the person oversees such cases but urge that there be some mention in the *Faculty Manual* of what the proper procedures are.

Professor Engel asked if there was any discussion and none was had.

Provost Bass stated that it is important for him to state that as Chief Academic Officer, he reviews each file independently based on the work that is presented and follows the *Manual*, which makes it clear that there is an independent review at each level. It is agonizing to deny anyone tenure who has gone through this process, but he stated he uses the guidelines in the *Manual* to make his judgment. At this time he has reviewed and made decisions on 181 cases, and each was reviewed carefully. Out of 181 cases, there are only a handful that have been denied, and he stated that they have all been reviewed with the same process.

Dean of Academic Affairs Mary Clark stated that more than 90% of the cases the Provost has reviewed have been approved for tenure and the denial rate was 9.63%.

RiSE/ Mellon Grant Update – Peter Starr, Sharon Alston and Fanta Aw

Dean Peter Starr stated that the Mellon Foundation has given AU a \$150,000 grant. Dean Starr stated that he would like to answer one question: “Why RiSE?” (Reinventing the Student Experience). The student body has changed so much over time, and with new demographics and a very diverse student body, they need more effective support systems. The overall hope of RiSE is to not coddle students, but make their four years at AU a more cohesive and supportive experience. Additionally, technology has brought many new issues to the college experience.

Vice Provost Sharon Alston gave an overview of the structure of the committee and sub-committees and each group’s responsibilities.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM

Proposed Amendments to the Undergraduate Academic Regulations

Submitted by Lyn Stallings, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies

October 7, 2015

Rationale for Sections 6.4, 6.5, and 10.3: The Undergraduate Regulations need to be aligned with the recently approved changes to the Graduate Regulations

Section 6.4 *Course Levels*

Current Regulation:

500-599: Graduate Courses that allow qualified, advanced undergraduates

600-799: Graduate Courses*

*No undergraduate students may take 600 – 799 Graduate courses except under specific circumstances where the courses are cross-listed with undergraduate courses, as part of a combined BA/MA program, or by special permission of the associate dean of the academic unit

Proposed Amendment:

500-599: Graduate Courses that are not core graduate courses, but courses of general importance in the discipline. These courses are open to qualified undergraduate students.

600-799: Graduate Courses that are core graduate courses for the master's degree in the field of study. Undergraduate students are not allowed in these courses except under specific circumstances where the courses are cross-listed with undergraduate courses, or as part of a combined BA/MA program, or by special permission of the associate dean of the academic unit.

Section 6.5: *Exceptions for Undergraduate Enrollment in Graduate Coursework*

Current Regulation:

Undergraduate students may take courses at the 600-level or above when they are accepted into a [combined master's/bachelor's degree](#). Students interested in combined bachelors/masters programs should refer to rules specific to the combined academic program in which they wish to enroll. Students must follow the Graduate Academic Regulations as they pertain to taking such courses.

Proposed Amendment:

Undergraduate students may take courses at the 600-level when they are:

- 1) seeking a combined master's/bachelor's degree, or
- 2) by special permission of the Associate Dean of the academic unit.

Students interested in combined bachelors/masters programs should refer to rules specific to the combined academic program in which they wish to enroll.

Students must follow the Graduate Academic Regulations as they pertain to taking such courses.

Section 10.3: Combined Bachelors and Masters Degrees

Current Regulation:

A combined bachelor's/master's program involves tentative admission to graduate standing so that both a bachelor's and master's degree may be earned as the result of a planned program of study. Highly qualified students in [good academic standing](#) may apply to a graduate program for a combined degree as soon as they have completed 75 earned [credits](#). With rare exceptions, students will apply no later than the semester in which they have 90 completed credits toward their degree. Admission during the junior year or equivalent allows sufficient time and preparation for curricular sequences and other research experiences that distinguish this option from separate bachelor's and master's degrees. No more than one graduate degree can be earned as a combined degree.

Students will be admitted to the combined program at two levels, i.e., for both the undergraduate degree and the graduate degree.

Once admitted during the junior year, students must follow a prescribed program of work, and their record must show which courses will be applied toward the undergraduate degree and which courses will be applied toward the master's degree. Once all undergraduate requirements have been satisfied, the student will be officially enrolled in the graduate program if they complete their bachelor's program in [good academic standing](#), and if they meet all University and [academic unit](#) or [teaching unit](#) requirements for admission to the master's program for the combined degree. Each academic unit or teaching unit sets its own admission standards and procedures for graduate students. Once enrolled in the master's program, students are then subject to the academic regulations governing graduate students.

The maximum number of credit hours that can be shared between the bachelor's and master's degrees is determined by the number of credit hours required for the master's degree, as shown in the chart below.

| Credit hours required for the master's program | Maximum number of shared credit hours between bachelor's and master's degree |
|--|--|
| 30-35 | 9 |
| 36-38 | 12 |
| 39 and above | 15 |

Proposed Amendment:

With Advanced planning, students may have an opportunity to pursue a combined Bachelor/Master's pursuant to Graduate Regulation 8.7. Students should consult with their academic advisor for details.

Rationale for 7.2.2: The added sentence is in the university catalog.

Section 7.2.1: *Permit to Study at Another U.S. Institution*

Students in [good academic standing](#) who wish to take courses that would not be considered [in residence](#) courses must receive prior approval by their [academic unit](#). **Permits to Study may not be authorized for non-articulated courses at community colleges or non-accredited four year institutions.** Students who want to apply a course to their major or minor must receive [teaching unit](#) or equivalent approval. Students must secure approval from the academic unit prior to registering for the course and such approval is granted only for specific courses. Students may transfer up to a total of 10 [credits](#) during this course of approved study at another U.S. institution. The number of credits approved for transfer from an international institution requires advanced approval from the academic unit.

Rationale for 10.1: Current language was adopted based on the same requirements used for the outgoing University Honors program. The AU Honors Program is tremendously challenging in that it is an intense and integrative experience that includes a range of areas in the liberal arts. Because of the intense academic challenge, we expect some students will not be able to get an A- or B+ in at least one core course. The Honors Faculty Advisory Committee recommended changing the requirement.

Section 10.1: *Honors Program*

Students in the American University Honors program must graduate with a cumulative GPA of 3.67 and **have an overall average of 3.0 on all courses required by the AU Honors program** to receive the notation on the final transcript, *American University Honors Program*.

Rationale for 12.3: To provide more clarity on the instructor's prerogative during the waitlist period.

Section 12.3: *Waitlist Rules*

Current Regulation:

Students often "waitlist" if they are considering adding a course or a new section of a course in lieu of the section in which they are currently enrolled. Students may not "waitlist" for more than one section of any course at any given time. Students may not waitlist for more than three unique courses at any point in time.

Proposed Amendment:

Students must be registered in order to participate in a course. At an instructor's discretion, a student on the Waitlist may participate through the end of the add/drop period. If, by the end of the add/drop period, the student is not able to register for the course the student must stop attending. This does not apply to students who audit the course.

Rationale for 12.5 (two changes):

1. Delay of the last day to withdraw from classes. See separate agenda item and relevant documents on Last Day to Withdraw from Classes.
2. Without the added phrase, “or the Student Conduct Code,” students have been able to withdraw from the university with a pending conduct code violation.

12.5 Withdrawal from a Course or from All Courses

Students may withdraw from a course or from all courses up until the end of the eighth *[separate proposal to change to “tenth”]* week of the semester or the equivalent for summer and other non-standard sessions unless they have been charged with a violation of the [Academic Integrity Code](#) or the [Student Conduct Code](#). Some additional restrictions on course withdrawals may apply to particular academic programs, international students, athletes, and cooperative education students. Additional restrictions may also apply to courses used to satisfy the [University Mathematics requirement](#). When students withdraw before the eighth week of the semester or equivalent for other terms, a grade of "W" is entered for each course.

Rationale for 12.6: Current language does not align with practice. New language follows practice of allowing the Dean of Students to initiate the petition.

Section 12.6 *Reduction of Course Load Due to Medical Reasons*

Current Regulation:

In the event a student encounters medical difficulties after the eighth week of the semester and wishes to withdraw from all courses or secure a reduced course load, the student must meet with the Office of the Dean of Students to provide medical documentation. After meeting with the Dean of Students, the student must meet with the academic advisor to file a petition requesting withdrawal from all courses or reduction of course load and all affected instructors must be consulted during the routing of the petition. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies makes the final decision for such withdrawals from all courses or reduced course loads.

Proposed Amendment:

In the event a student encounters medical difficulties after the end of the eighth [*separate proposal to change to “tenth”*] week of the semester and wishes to withdraw from all courses or secure a reduced course load, the student must meet with the Office of the Dean of Students to provide medical documentation and initiate a request to withdraw. If possible, students should arrange to receive an incomplete(s) rather than a withdrawal(s) per regulation 3.5. All affected instructors must be consulted during the routing of the petition. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies makes the final decision for such withdrawals from all courses or reduced course loads.

Ad-Hoc Grade Inflation Committee

2015-2016

Pat Aufderheide – SOC
Kyle Brannon – SOC
Victoria Connaughton – CAS
Christine Dulaney – University Library
Dan Freeman - SPEX
Paul Figley – WCL
Gopal Krishnan, KSB
Howard McCurdy – SPA
Cynthia Idris-Miller – CAS
Stina Oakes – CAS
Arturo Porzecanski – SIS

Ex-Officio Members

Marilyn Goldhammer - CTRL
Karen Froslid-Jones – Institutional Research and Assessment (resource only)
Michael Keynes – Graduate Studies
Doug McKenna or Designated Rep – OUR
Lyn Stallings – Office of Undergraduate Curriculum

Two Proposed Changes to Last Date to Withdraw from Classes

October 7, 2015

There are two proposals to change the last date to withdraw. Provide below are two items that relate to the proposals. The first is a benchmark report of nine institutions' withdrawal policies. The second is the AU Undergraduate Regulation on Repetition of Courses. These two items will be followed by the two proposals.

Benchmarks:

Georgetown

Policy: A deletion of the course from the record will be made only if the student drops within the designated add/drop period in a given session; thereafter, dropped courses are indicated by a "W" grade. It is at the discretion of the Dean whether or not the course is dropped from the transcript (rare occurrence). If a student drops a course after the last date to withdraw (November 5th), the decision is made at the discretion of the Dean.

Last day of class (before the exam period): December 9th

Tufts

Policy: First year undergraduate students have until November 17th to drop a course without record of enrollment (November 11th for non-first year students). If a student drops a course after November 11th or November 17th, they have until December 11th by 5pm, to withdraw and will receive a "W" on their transcript.

Last day of class (before the exam period): December 11th

Boston University

Policy: Generally, a student may add courses through the second week of classes and drop courses online through the fifth week of classes without receiving a "W" on their transcript. Any course dropped after the allotted time period will receive a "W" on the student's transcript. If a student drops a course after the last date to withdraw (November 6th) from a course with a "W," the student will receive whatever letter grade (A-F) the professor submits for that student in that particular course.

Last day of class (before the exam period): December 10th

Boston College

Policy: The last date to withdraw from a fall 2015 course is November 30, 2015. Any course dropped after these dates will receive a "W." If a student drops a course after the last date to withdraw (November 30th), a decision will be made on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Dean.

Last day of class (before the exam period): December 9th

NYU

Policy: The grade of “W” will appear when the student drops a course outside of the add/drop period. If a student drops a course after the last date to withdraw, the student must obtain approval to do so from their advisor and department. If a student is granted permission to withdraw after the last date to withdraw (November 3rd), the grade of “W” will appear.

Last day of class (before the exam period): December 15th

Syracuse

Policy: If a student withdraws from a course after the last date to withdraw (November 20th) for the semester; a “WD” will appear on the students’ transcript. A “WD” on a transcript holds no weight on the GPA.

Last day of class (before the exam period): December 11th

Bucknell

Policy: Students are given a 2 week add/drop period where they may drop a course without penalty. Students have up to 4 weeks (September 18th) to perform a late drop from a class resulting in a grade of a “W.” Twice during their time at the university, students are allowed to utilize a 10 week drop and would receive a “W.” Beyond that, dropping a course would carry a letter grade.

Last day of class (before the exam period): December 8th

Brown

Policy: If a student withdraws after the last date to withdraw (December 11th); they will receive no credit for the course. Students are not permitted to withdraw after this deadline.

Last day of class (before the exam period): December 8th

Swarthmore College

Policy: If a student withdraws after the last date to withdraw (November 6th); they will receive no credit for each course they choose to withdraw from.

Last day of class (before the exam period): December 8th

AU Undergraduate Academic Regulation 4.3. *Repetition of Courses*

Students have a maximum of three attempts to pass a course. [Withdrawal](#) from a course counts as an attempt. Once students pass a course taken at AU, they may repeat it one more time unless the repetition exceeds the maximum number of three attempts. The repetition policy applies to a maximum of five courses including those courses repeated under the [Freshman Forgiveness policy](#) (given below) during their tenure at the university. Students are responsible for determining any academic or financial implications for repeating courses. In the context of this policy, passing a course includes meeting any stipulations needed to satisfy a university or major or minor requirement. Grades for each attempt are computed in the overall [cumulative GPA](#), but only the highest grade and the credit associated with that grade counts toward the major GPA requirements.

Proposal 1: From Eighth Week to Tenth Week of the Regular Terms

Submitted by Lyn Stallings, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies

The current last day to withdraw from classes with a W on the transcript is the end of the eighth week of a regular term and a proportional period in other terms.

Proposal: Change the last day to withdraw from classes to the end of the tenth week of a regular term and a proportional period in the other terms.

1. The earlier dates for dropping with 100% refund and withdrawing with partial refunds are not changed by this proposal.
2. Currently, withdrawals after the eighth week are approved only in the event of a medical or traumatic occurrence.
3. Consulting the benchmarks gathered, AU's last day to withdraw is earlier than eight of the benchmark institutions. Our date coincides with midterm exams. Therefore, many students do not get feedback in time to make this important decision.
4. Four of the benchmark universities allow up to 10 weeks. Syracuse allows 11 weeks. Bucknell has a restricted 10 week withdrawal policy. Boston College's date is one week before the last day of classes. Tufts and Brown allow withdrawals up to the last day of classes.
5. The transcript is a record of the student's academic performance and withdrawals result in no impact on the GPA. The ability to withdraw up to the last day of classes results in some students getting Ws when, in fact, they were failing; other students who persist get Fs. The result is that AU will issue transcripts that are inconsistent in reporting students' academic capabilities.
6. AU students may withdraw without penalty as long as they don't violate the regulation on repetition of courses. This could result in a protracted amount of time to complete the degree especially if students change majors.

Proposal to Extend Withdrawal Date to Last Day of Classes
Rob Hradsky
September 25, 2015

Current Practice

Students may withdraw from one or more courses through the mid-term of the semester. After this date, students must petition for an exception to academic regulations in order to drop one or more courses. Typically, petitions are approved only when there are extraordinary circumstances such as a medical or mental health concern that severely impacted the student's academic performance.

Petitions require the student to write a statement requesting the exception and to articulate the rationale for the request. If the reason for the request is related to a medical or mental health concern, the student must provide medical documentation to the Dean of Students Office that identifies the concern and its impact on the student's ability to successfully complete the semester. The petition must be approved by the student's academic advisor and associate dean, and then must be routed to the instructor of each course and the Dean of Students for feedback. If the petition to withdraw is based on the last date of attendance, instructors are asked to verify the date the student last attended class. Once this process is completed, the petition is routed to the vice provost who makes a decision to approve or deny the petition.

Proposed Change

The withdrawal date for one or more courses is moved to the last day of classes each semester. Until the last day of class, students may withdraw from courses for any reason and are not required to document extenuating circumstances.

Rationale

1. *Puts students in control of their individual circumstances and provides more time for them to make a decision regarding on-going registration.* AU data shows that approximately 30% of new AU students enter college with a diagnosed mental health concern, and almost two-thirds have engaged in therapy before or after beginning college. Students experiencing a medical or mental health concern are often engaged in treatment during the semester and cannot make a fully informed decision about withdrawing from a course or courses by the current deadline. Additionally, some students experience the first onset of a mental health condition and may not be aware at the onset that what they are experiencing is an issue that requires care from a professional. Extending the deadline to the end of the semester allows the student to make a fully informed decision based on treatment progress and level of functioning. An earlier deadline puts undue pressure on the student to make a decision that may not be in their best interest.
2. *Reinforces the principle of universal design.* Removing the need to petition for a course withdrawal creates an educational environment accessible by all students without the need for adaptation or special exceptions for students with medical or mental health concerns, or disabilities. A universal deadline set at the last day of classes enables all students for whatever reason to reduce their course load, if necessary and appropriate.
3. *Provides faculty with additional options when advising students.* When students are failing a class, they often go to faculty to ask what can be done to avoid the failure. This puts faculty in the position of having to consider often unreasonable demands to make up extraordinary amounts of work. If

students are permitted to withdraw from classes later in the semester, faculty can simply advise students to withdraw from the class.

4. *Promotes resiliency.* In the current process, the most reliable way to petition to withdraw from a course or courses after the deadline is to provide verification that the student did not attend class since the withdrawal deadline. As such, students are often advised not to continue to go to class if they think that they may need to withdraw. If students are able to withdraw until the end of the semester, students can be encouraged to continue attending class and to seek resources to support their success.
5. *Removes administration from the position of making a judgement about the impact of a student's medical or mental health concern, disability or traumatic experience (such as a sexual assault) on their ability to maintain their current enrollment.* Students who request an exception to the current policy often have experienced a significant set-back that can occur at any point in the semester. Making judgements about the impact of a student's situation or experience may potentially place the university at risk if decisions are made inconsistently or against the recommendation of the student's medical provider. Further, students who experience significant set-backs often see the petition process as an emotional and administrative burden that causes undue stress during an already difficult time.
6. *Removes significant administrative burden for students, faculty, and staff.* Dozens of petitions are submitted each semester requesting adjustments to course registrations. Petitions require the student to write a personal statement documenting the need for the request. The statement is then reviewed and approved by the student's academic advisor and associate dean, and routed to each of the student's faculty to comment on the student's last date of attendance and performance in the course. In cases of medical or mental health conditions, petitions are routed to the Dean of Students Office for verification of medical documentation and comment. Finally, the completed petition with all comments and verification is reviewed by the vice provost who makes a decision to approve or deny the petition. Each step of the process requires a significant investment of time on the part of the commenter or approver, and there are numerous situations in which petitions are "suspended" and must be resubmitted.

In 2014-15, the Dean of Students Office worked with 143 petitions in which supporting medical documentation was required. It often takes students a significant amount of time to obtain documentation from their medical provider extending the timeframe for a decision. Students are advised to continue taking classes while the petition is being reviewed in the event the withdrawal is denied. Moving the withdrawal date to the last day of classes will eliminate the majority of petitions and responds to student feedback regarding excessive university bureaucracy documented on the Campus Climate Survey and in RiSE Initiative focus groups.

Mediating Potential Concerns

1. *Some students may act to withdraw from a course or courses before carefully considering their options.* This concern exists with the current or an extended withdrawal deadline. Students could be required to meet with their academic advisor in order to drop one or more courses. Messages could also be built into the registration system that warn students about potential consequences of dropping courses. The current registration system prevents students from dropping all of their courses and requires intervention from their academic advisor in order to drop all courses.

2. *Dropping below full-time status can have significant financial aid consequences.* This concern exists with the current or an extended withdrawal deadline. Messages could be built into the registration system that warn students about potential consequences of dropping courses. In addition, the registration system could be configured to prevent students from dropping below 12 credits without intervention from their academic advisor. Some students with federal financial aid may benefit from staying enrolled in a course until the end of the semester due to “Return of Title IV Funds” regulations regarding course withdrawals and returning federal aid.
3. *Permitting a student to drop a course at any time will enable them to drop courses they are not doing well in and improve their overall academic record.* Current academic regulations do not permit a student to repeat a course more than twice, and withdrawing from a course counts as an attempt. Students will have limited opportunities to repeat courses in the interest of improving their grade. Further, withdrawals are noted on students' transcripts, so the record of their performance is preserved, discouraging a pattern of frequent withdrawals. Dropping a course carries significant academic and financial consequences which serve as a deterrent to arbitrarily dropping courses. Universities with withdrawal deadlines at the end of the semester such as Brown, Tufts, University of Maryland, Georgetown Law School, and others have not expressed concerns about the withdrawal date affecting their academic reputation or otherwise diminishing their academic standards.
4. *More students will withdraw from courses if the deadline is extended to the end of the semester resulting in an extended time to degree.* The opposite may actually be true. Many students choose to withdraw by the mid-semester withdrawal deadline if they are not doing well in a course regardless of their potential to improve their performance. Extending the deadline to the end of the semester will give students maximum opportunity to access resources and succeed in their courses.