

To: Faculty Senate

From: Timothy Hamilton  
Chair, University Academic Program Committee

Date: April 16, 2020

Re: Motion to Change the Withdrawal from Course Process

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The University Academic Program Committee considered a proposal to update the Petitions and Academic Appeals Process. The proposal was brought to UAPC by Joe Boehman (Dean, Richmond College), Susan Breeden (University Registrar), Chip Bryan (AVP and Director of Student Financial Aid), Mia Reinoso Genoni (Dean, Westhampton College), Saif Mehkari (Associate Professor, Economics and Chair, Committee on Committees), Carol Parish (Associate Provost and Professor of Chemistry), and Lori Schuyler (Vice President for Planning and Policy). Proposed updates:

1. Revise the withdrawal period from the current deadline (end of the 7th week) to the end of the 10th week of classes.
2. Revise the withdrawal process to include student consultation with College Deans in addition to consultation with their faculty advisor and the faculty instructor prior to withdrawal from course
3. Revise the withdrawal process to require students to seek counsel (signature) from College Dean, advisor, and faculty member prior to withdrawal from a course, but not permission to withdraw.
4. Clarify the conditions under which students may withdraw from a course after the deadline to include "other circumstances of similar seriousness" in addition to current "medical reasons"

Redlined changes and proposed policy language are below, following justification of the changes. The committee voted 8-0 in favor of this proposal with 0 abstentions. We recommend the Senate move forward with this policy.

The following summarizes the committees support for the proposal.

- a. This proposal is rooted in the recommendations of the Student Support Services Subcommittee of the President's Advisory Committee on Making Excellence Inclusive.
- b. NA
- c. The deadline extension is important for students to have more information regarding their current standing in the course. The committee felt that students should not need permission to withdraw, but should consult with faculty, advisors, and college deans about their decision.
- d. No resources are needed to implement this proposal.
- e. The policy will be immediately implemented following Senate approval.
- f. Attached memo from the originators of the policy proposal with additional justification.

- 1) Revise the withdrawal period from the current deadline (end of the 7th week) to the end of the 10th week of classes.
  - A primary reason for adjusting this deadline is that students may have insufficient graded work to make an informed decision by the current deadline.
  - A later deadline provides more time for the student to receive advice from faculty and College Deans and, when appropriate, withdraw from course in which they are not succeeding in order to focus on the other three or more courses in which they may be able to succeed, rather than working to improve their grade in one class at the expense of the other courses in which they are enrolled.
  - There is little risk of harm of a later deadline, since presumably a student who withdraws at the 10-week mark would only have remained beyond midterms if attempting to succeed in the course.
  - The later deadline is better aligned with peer institutions, only two of which have withdrawal deadline earlier than the 8th week (Wake Forest, which allows students until 5 days after midterm grades are due, and Bowdoin which allows until week 6 with permission, but such withdrawals approved by week 6 are simply removed from the transcript.)
  
- 2) Revise the withdrawal process to include student consultation with College Deans, in addition to consultation with their faculty advisor and faculty instructor, prior to withdrawal from course.
  - The purpose of requiring consultation with the College Deans is to ensure that College Deans can advise the student when it is still possible to help support student success. Today College Deans are primarily notified of Ws taken in the first half of the semester only after the student has withdrawn from the course, unless a student chooses to seek guidance, and frequently it would have been more helpful for the student to be in closer conversation with College Deans about alternatives to withdrawal or ways of addressing the underlying issue prompting consideration of withdrawal, especially when the issue causing the W extends beyond a particular course.
  - Requiring consultation with the College Dean will also help ensure that there is a full holistic view of the student situation when a student is considering withdrawal, since College Deans are privy to all confidential information about students (e.g., Threat Assessment Team information, hospitalization, financial aid, etc.), including information that the student may not wish to share with a faculty member or which the student may not realize is relevant (e.g., consequences of part-time status for housing, financial aid, or academic warning).

3) Revise the withdrawal process to require students to seek counsel (signature) from College Dean, advisor, and faculty member prior to withdrawal from a course, but not permission to withdraw.

- This recommended change is designed to ensure that students have full knowledge of the consequence of a decision to withdraw while also encouraging students to have agency to make (and face the consequences of) those decisions. Signatures will affirm that student has been counseled about the planned withdrawal and its consequences, rather than seeking permission for decision to withdraw.
- By requiring students to seek advice rather than permission, this policy change will ensure consistency and equity in students' access to withdrawal from a course, because all similarly situated students will be able to withdraw from course; faculty members individually may apply different standards that result in inconsistency if permission is required.
- There is little to be gained by requiring a student who wishes to withdraw from a course to remain in the course – at worst it can be harmful to the individual student who is unable to be successful and/or disruptive for other students to have a student remain who is so disengaged or unable to meet the expectations for the course.
- The current rule, requiring permission of the instructor and advisor, was established when the University did not have any requirement for students to earn a specific number of units in order to remain in good academic standing. The rules passed by the faculty last year which require students to be making certain grades and earn adequate units toward graduation each semester ensure that students will not be able to take frequent Ws without resulting in academic warning or withdrawal for academic reasons. While students certainly continue to need advice and counsel as they make decisions about withdrawal from a course, requiring permission to withdraw no longer seems necessary now that the faculty have established a units-earned threshold that is consistently applied to all students each semester.

4) Clarify the conditions under which students may withdraw from a course after the deadline to include “other circumstances of similar seriousness” in addition to current “medical reasons”.

Today the University policy reads: “Ordinarily, a student may not withdraw from a course after the end of the seventh week of classes except for medical reasons.” Given the array of types of emergencies that might cause a student to need to withdraw from a course, this proposal would change the catalog language to read “except for medical reasons or other circumstances of similar seriousness.”

- Under the current rules there is some confusion about the ability to withdraw for serious but non-medical issues after the seventh week of class; this change would allow for sudden or unforeseen non-medical circumstances such as death in the family or other family emergency that result in a student's need to withdraw from a course.
- By expanding the definition to include these serious, non-medical issues, students facing these issues will be treated more consistently, because it will be clear that withdrawals for these serious issues are permissible.

*Redlined Policy:*

### **Change of Registration**

Students are able to register for classes through BannerWeb, a secured website that may be accessed ~~over the Internet~~ at bannerweb.richmond.edu or through the University's website. Through BannerWeb, students can register for classes, add and drop classes through the end of add/drop period, view their class schedules, view grades for a specific term, and view their unofficial University of Richmond transcript. Students are responsible for all activity on their BannerWeb account including PIN maintenance, registration, and security. If a student has questions or needs assistance with any aspect of BannerWeb, he or she should contact the Office of the University Registrar at (804) 289-8639 or registrar@richmond.edu.

Once registered, students may change their registration (add/drop) according to the published schedule. For a regular term, adds and withdrawals without academic record may generally be made during the first two weeks of classes. Summer terms have abbreviated add/drop and withdrawal periods, so please consult the summer academic calendar for those dates. After the end of the first 10 days of classes, but before the end of the ~~10<sup>th</sup> -seventh~~ week, a withdrawal-with-record period is in effect where students may withdraw from courses provided that they ~~consult with their College Dean, receive the permission of the~~ appropriate course instructor, and academic advisor. Students will receive ~~an M grade if failing at the time of withdrawal or~~ a W grade ~~if passing~~ at the time of withdrawal. Ordinarily, a student may not withdraw from a course after the end of the ~~10<sup>th</sup> seventh~~ week of classes except for medical reasons ~~or other circumstances of similar seriousness as determined by the student's college dean. The student's dean may, under special circumstances, make an exception to this policy.~~

*Revised Policy:*

### **Change of Registration**

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