

The University of Arizona

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FACULTY SENATE

Meeting of Monday

May 2, 1966

PRESENT: Bartlett, Beattie, Blitzer, Brewer, Carlson, Chadwick, Damon, Delaplane, Forrester, Gegenheimer, Hall, Harris, Harshbarger, Hillman, Johnson, Joyner, Kruttsch, Little, Lynn, Marcoux, McCaughey, McMillan, Myers, Patrick, Picard, Quinn, Roy, Shields, Simonian, Stanislawski, Steelink, Stromberg, Svob, Voris, Wilson, and Windsor.

ABSENT: Blecha, Cockrum, Coleman, Coulter, DuVal, Gaines, Gries, Harvill, Hull, Lyons, McCarthy, McDonald, Paulsen, Rappeport, Rhodes, Robinson, Sorensen, Tucker, and Yoshino

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE BYLAWS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY, APPROVAL OF: The Senate considered a proposed amendment to the Bylaws of the University of Arizona General Faculty, as recommended by the Special Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure. The proposal would add the following paragraph to Bylaw 12,b,ii, below subparagraph (h). The proposal read as follows:

A hearing by the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure shall be conducted according to accepted rules of an administrative fact-finding commission. The chairman, assisted by the other members, shall conduct the hearing and shall be responsible for a full and complete hearing of the issues at stake. The chairman shall initiate and ask questions of the witnesses. All questions of witnesses, regardless of source, shall be asked through the chairman, or shall be directed at his discretion.

Dr. Shields moved adoption of the amendment and the motion was seconded by Dr. Gegenheimer.

The question was called for and the motion passed without dissenting vote.

RECOMMENDATION FROM COMMITTEE OF ELEVEN THAT FAILING GRADES RECEIVED IN RESIDENCE DURING THE FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE YEARS NOT BE INCLUDED IN GRADUATION GRADE AVERAGE IF REPEATED IN RESIDENCE, CONSIDERATION OF: The Senate considered a recommendation from the Committee of Eleven that the following rule relating to calculating graduation grade average be repealed: "that the grade of 5 for a course failed in the freshman or sophomore year is not included in the graduation grade average when the course is repeated and established for credit in residence at the University." It was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved.

Dr. Bartlett said he would like to make a plea on behalf of a substantial number of young people who as beginning students in the University are overwhelmed by a host of problems and who should be allowed at least one opportunity to "start over again" when they have scholastic difficulty. He said he would like to retain the present policy but limit it to the freshman year.

In answer to a question of why this proposal had been made, Dr. Gegenheimer explained that this subject has been discussed many times in the Senate over the years. He pointed out that at one time the Senate did abolish the procedure and then reinstated it. He said this action was taken at the same time that a cumulative grade average was established as the factor determining which students would be placed on probation, subject to disqualification, etc. Previously probation

and disqualification had been based on whether or not a student in a given semester had received grades above 4 in 80% or more of his work. He said that the "forgiving of 5's" provision was originally established in the immediate post-war period to accommodate returning veterans who sometimes had earned poor records before entering service. It was felt that returning veterans with a more mature attitude should not be required to include in their graduation grade averages failing marks received before entering service. The returning GI's of that time have long since left the campus, he pointed out.

He said that the feeling of the Committee of Eleven and some other members of the faculty was that the graduation grade average should be an honest one rather than a doctored one. It should represent all the work a student has attempted rather than eliminate the failed courses which have later been repeated.

Dr. Gegenheimer said that the Committee of Eleven had recently received a letter pointing out that now in many cases freshmen and sophomores who had been awarded a grade of 4 plead to be awarded a failing grade of 5 instead, since the 5 could later be eliminated from the graduation grade average but the 4 would be included. Any system which suggests to a student that he should ask for a failing grade has something wrong with it, he said.

Dr. Bartlett said it was his understanding that such failing grades are not expunged from the record but simply are not included in calculating the graduation grade average. Dr. Gegenheimer said that Dr. Bartlett's understanding was correct. He said, however, semester-by-semester cumulative grade averages include all grades, including the 5's. Thus a student can approach graduation with a satisfactory graduation grade average and yet be on probation because of his actual grade average.

Dr. Patrick said he would like to object to the use of such phrases as "honest grade average" and "doctored grade average." A grade average may be computed according to any established procedure for a particular purpose.

He said he would like to point out that many students commence their University careers intending to become mathematicians, physicists, chemists, or engineers, for examples, and then later learn that another field is better suited to their capabilities. During the period of their misdirected enrollment they may receive a number of low grades. If they are no stronger than average students, they then have an almost impossible task to overcome the low grades they received when they were in the incorrect study field. He said he was opposed to the motion.

Dr. Harris asked if it was correct to say that a few years ago the Senate raised the graduation grade average.

Dr. Gegenheimer explained that the average was raised from 3.2000 to 3.0000. He said that at the time the "forgiving of 5's" policy was adopted, a study made by the Registrar's office indicated that there was not a large number of students qualifying for graduation because their lower division 5's were forgiven who would not have qualified had the lower division 5's been included in the average.

Professor Marcoux said he would like to speak against the proposal. He said he was acquainted with the new junior colleges developing in the State of Arizona. He said that while the junior colleges for the most part are doing a satisfactory educational job, he feels that their students are not comparable in ability to those of the University. He said it would be unfair to give an advantage to the

junior college student who could at the end of two years transfer to the University and have his graduation grade average based only on work taken in the junior and senior years, while our own students were forced to absorb into their graduation grade average any 5's they received during the freshman and sophomore years.

Vice President Johnson said he recalled that he was active with the student body when this matter was before the Faculty Senate some years ago. He said he was sure some members of the Senate would recall that at one point when it was proposed that the forgiving of lower-division 5's be discontinued (the graduation grade average requirement was then 3.2000) the students themselves proposed that the privilege of having 5's forgiven be retained but that the graduation grade average be raised from 3.2000 to 3.0000.

He said he thought the present system was working well. The change that is proposed would, he felt, encourage a considerable number of students to transfer away from the University to other institutions.

Dr. Joyner said he thought the matter reduced itself to the question of whether this institution is going to have high academic standards or not. He said he could appreciate the problems a freshman student has. On the other hand he said he felt that the Senate should put students on notice that our standards are higher than some other institutions' and that we are striving to become a first-class University. This adjustment would be one of the logical steps needed to attain this goal. He said he hoped the present rule would be repealed.

Dr. Blitzer said he thought the matter should not be considered simply because under the present rules certain students awarded 4's asked to be awarded 5's instead. Certainly the faculty know how to award grades and should give a 4-student a 4 and a 5-student a 5, he said.

Dean Brewer commented that many universities are being criticized for being large, impersonal institutions. Here is an instance where we do give some personal consideration to an individual student because we take into account the fact that as a lower-division student he might be having a variety of difficulties which contribute to his receiving failing grades. Of course it is a fact that a confusing situation results from the fact that the cumulative grade average used for probation, disqualification, etc. may include some 5's that are dropped in calculating the graduation grade average. This isn't the fault of the student; this is because our machine equipment is not yet sophisticated enough to forgive certain 5's.

Dr. Steelink said he thought there were already opportunities for "forgiveness" in certain situations when grades of 6, 7, or 8 may be awarded.

Mr. Windsor asked if the Committee of Eleven had considered alternative plans. He said he did not know how many institutions forgive freshman and sophomore failing grades under a procedure similar to ours, but he said some sort of plan is found at many institutions which takes into account concern about not penalizing students for poor grades received in the difficult adjustment period during the early college years. He referred to a General College or University College or first-year program of some sort which some institutions have. Freshman students must earn a certain average to get out of this General College. Their graduation grade average is then calculated only on course work taken after they are no longer in the General College but are in one of the degree-granting divisions of the institution. He wondered if some such proposal as this might have merit in the eyes of the Committee of Eleven.

Dr. Blitzer said he felt the feeling of the Committee of Eleven was that they hoped their recommendation would stimulate thinking about the over-all problems so that some change of procedure might be found.

Dr. Delaplane said he was opposed to the motion but he hoped the matter would be given further study.

Dr. Patrick said certain references had been made to "forgiving" 5's. He said he thought this was a poor word to describe the situation under discussion.

Professor Marcoux said that when he learned that this proposal was going to be presented, he made a survey of the 1966 graduating class in Mechanical Engineering. Of the group completing requirements this spring, he said, 30% would not be graduating had the University not had the provision to drop failing grades of the freshman and sophomore years from the graduation grade average if the courses were repeated in residence and passed. He emphasized that these students are all capable. He said he is confident they are going to be good engineers who will reflect credit on the University. However, they would not now be graduating from the University and available as professionally trained engineers had the University not had the present procedure. He said he would like to support the point made by Dean Brewer about the image of the University and its concern for student welfare. He said that in late years the University has improved and undoubtedly is becoming an outstanding University. We are growing all the time, he said, and it would be awfully easy to acquire the reputation that with size we have lost the personal touch with our students. He said many of his friends are sending their sons and daughters to Northern Arizona University at Flagstaff. His own son is there. Students at that institution report they have splendid rapport with faculty members which does not exist at the University of Arizona. "I do not like to hear this," he said. It is relatively easy to become so big we forget our first obligation is to educate the sons and daughters of Arizonans. He said we do not need to worry about our graduates bringing distinction to the University of Arizona, but we should not forget that some would not be able to graduate without having certain lower-division 5's not included in the graduation grade average.

Dr. Joyner said he agreed with the sentiments expressed by Professor Marcoux and Dean Brewer about the concern the faculty should feel for students. However, the procedure under discussion is not a way in which to demonstrate concern, he said. Many things should be done to improve rapport with students - smaller classes, for one thing. However, he feels that the forgiving of 5's invites students to play around in their studies and delay settling down to serious college work. "They can always take the course over and get rid of a failing grade if they flunk," he said.

Dean Myers asked if his understanding was correct that a student transferring to the University of Arizona had any 5's in his record not counted. Mr. Windsor explained if he had many failing grades, he probably would not be admitted in the first place. However, any grades, failing or not, received at another institution are not included in the computation of his University of Arizona grade average.

Dr. Delaplane pointed out that transfer students once admitted need not worry about any poor grades received as a freshman, for instance, but the student who has been a freshman at Arizona is responsible for freshman grades in his average unless a failure is forgiven after the course has been repeated and passed in residence under the procedure under discussion.

Professor Hall pointed out that the number of students who initially were admitted to an engineering program and who then later found they were in the wrong area and must transfer to another division is considerable. These students should not have to absorb in their graduation grade average their poor grades when they were enrolled in Engineering. He said a survey of all of the department heads of the College of Engineering had been made and that all of these persons felt strongly that the present procedure of forgiving 5's should be retained.

Dr. Steelink commented that he felt the best way to build rapport with students would be to find a means for faculty members and students to know each other. To forgive failing grades does not build better faculty-student rapport, he felt.

Dean Roy stated that he felt most good schools have a concern for the lower-division student who is in serious scholastic difficulty and they provide various forms of assistance. Some schools, Harvard for instance, provide special tutors. There are a number of other procedures followed. He, therefore, said he did not think it was correct to say that to take this problem into account was contrary to the true University spirit. We should have confidence in the quality of our teaching and feel we are doing first-rate University work, and whether or not we are truly a University is not dependent upon whether or not we have a policy of forgiving 5's, he said.

He said he did wish a way could be devised to have the current cumulative average drop the forgiven 5's as is the case in the graduation grade average.

Mr. Windsor said when more sophisticated machine equipment is available, this certainly should be explored. However, even a new computer would have difficulty in knowing which 5's in a student's record should be dropped in computing a graduation grade average. He said to program the forgiving of 5's would be a major project. Just one aspect of the problem, he said, is the number of instances where course numbers have changed. He said one possible procedure would be for the student to have the responsibility of telling the Registrar himself by completing a special form any time he is repeating a course which he failed while a freshman or sophomore. This system would be dependable only to the extent that student accuracy could be relied upon.

Dr. Lynn said that a number of people in the room were probably well acquainted with cases like one which had come to her mind, that of a student who in his first years on the University campus made a very poor record. Under our system he was later able to graduate from the University and satisfactorily completed his graduate work, earning a Ph.D. degree, and is now a full professor on the faculty of Stanford University. She said that the Senate's discussion was failing to point to the real evil in the situation. The reason many lower-division students do take courses in which they should never have been registered in the first place and in which therefore they receive failing grades is, she emphasized, the lack of a sound advising system when the students first enroll. Several Senators concurred with Miss Lynn's statement.

Dean Myers commented that he had reviewed the proposal being discussed with the department heads of the College of Agriculture and the large majority of those persons feel that the proposal should not be accepted. The question was then called for.

Dr. Blitzer then moved that the motion be referred to a special study committee of the Senate and this motion was seconded by Dr. Harris. The motion carried with one opposing vote being heard.

Dr. Joyner asked when the committee appointed to study the question of early final examinations in the spring for graduating seniors would submit its report. It was pointed out that Dr. Arthur Beattie is chairman of this committee and it is planned to have a report ready for the Faculty Senate in the fall of 1966.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 P.M.

David L. Windsor, Secretary