**ACADEMIC POLICIES ANNUAL REPORT**

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE 2023-2024**

**Committee Members:**

Dominque Banville (CEHD) Chair (fall), Douglas Eyman (CHSS – 2025) Chair (spring), Kerri LaCharite (CPH – 2025), Alexandra Masterson (COS – 2024), Cristiana Stan (COS – 2025) and Anne B. Verhoeven (COS-2024)

Charge: This Committee of the Senate shall concern itself with the applicability, appropriateness and reasonableness of academic policies that are University-wide in their scope and have implications for the standards and procedures of the various schools and colleges. Senate reviews of new or existing programs shall take into account the purpose and nature of the particular college or school as well as the goals of the University. It is recognized that while it is desirable for some academic policies to be University-wide, it is not the function of the Senate to enforce uniformity. Within these guidelines this Committee's responsibility shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Existing degree programs;

B. Standards and policies concerning admissions, retention and suspension, graduation requirements, examinations and grading system, student academic records, and University courses;

C. The academic calendar;

D. Studying the need for new schools, colleges, centers, institutes, and degree programs; and

E. Coordinating inter-college matters of an academic nature.

**Academic Policies Reviewed 2024-25**

At the **September 27** Faculty Senate Meeting, the AP Committee presented changes to AP 1.2 Academic Load as well as Proposed Catalog Policy AP 2.5: Syllabus Requirements, both of which were approved.

At the **October 25** Faculty Senate Meeting, Student Government submitted “A Resolution to Support a Uniform AI Policy in the Mason Classroom Environment” which was referred to AP committee. Also at this meeting the AP provided a reminder that Juneteenth and July 4 holidays may impact contact hours for summer A and B sessions, and that the Registrar’s office confirmed that the addition of Juneteenth will not affect these requirements.

At the **November 15** Faculty Senate Meeting, the AP Committee presented changes to AP.3.3 (dealing with new system requirements for grades of IN), which was approved. Regarding the Academic Calendar, the committee provided a proposal for the 24-25 academic year to push the start of the semester to August 26 rather than August 19, and all dates would shift to accommodate the later start. Last day of class would be December 7, reading days December 9-10, exam period December 11-18, Commencement December 19, degree conferral December 21.

In response to the Student Government resolution regarding Artificial Intelligence, the Academic Policies committee recommended that a task force be created to look at Artificial Intelligence and make use of the information available at the Stearns Center. The committee felt it was premature to create a policy given the rapid development of this issue and wanted to look more holistically than just having a syllabus statement. The Stearns Center does have suggested syllabus language which the Academic Policies committee supports and recommends. To date, no task force or committee has been developed to deal with AI issues, potentially placing GMU at a strategic disadvantage relative to other institutions. The committee hopes that this issue will be revisited once we have selected our new provost.

At the **December 6** Faculty Senate Meeting, the AP Committee presented changes to AP 1.7, Re-enrollment After Previous Attendance as requested by the Graduate Council. Motion passed.

The committee also brought forth a proposal to designate Election Day as a student holiday, beginning in Fall 2024. The motion was approved. As a result of this change, the Faculty Senate voted to 1) eliminate the reading day and 20 no longer hold Monday classes on Tuesday after Fall Break.

*Chair Dominique Banville took on an administrative role at the end of the fall semester; the committee elected Douglas Eyman as chair for spring 2024 and the nominations committee secured Anne Verhoevan as the fifth member of the committee.*

At the **February 7** Faculty Senate Meeting, the AP Committee presented changes to AP.4.4, providing a distinction between awarding a posthumous degree vs a recognition. Aproved.

The committee also reported on issues with the length of the summer semester, which was determined to require more contact hours than typically required. The committee corresponded with the registrar’s office and have clarified that when calculating contact hours, GMU operates on 15-week semesters (and the exam week counts as the final week). This equates to 2250 minutes of contact for a class. For asynchronous and other online courses, it has to be the equivalent of that, which we leave to the faculty to figure out. In summer sessions there is currently an additional 250 minutes scheduled. The committee did not propose a change to the schedule because there are so many different approaches to summer courses, and instead advised faculty to ensure that their syllabus equates to at least 2250 minutes of contact.

At the **February 28** Faculty Senate Meeting, the AP Committee chair (and Graduate Council liaison) presented updates from Graduate Council, reporting on updated leave of absence procedures, and updates to the transfer of credits policy, among other announcements.

At the **April 3** Faculty Senate Meeting, the AP Committee presented changes to AP.5.3.1 Declaration of a Major. Approved.

At the **April 24** Faculty Senate Meeting, the AP Committee presented changes to AP4.3 – Graduation.

**Proposed Committee Topics to Address in 2024-25**

Multiple changes to summer schedule were made by the registrar's office without an announcement, much less submitted for senate approval. The committee should confirm the role of the Senate with regard to calendar changes.

Academic Standards (formerly Honor Code) are apparently not academic policies by virtue of being established and overseen by the administration. The committee should develop procedures that outline which policies are academic (should be voted on by faculty) versus issues that are clearly in the realm of academic policy but not part of shared governance.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Eyman, Chair

Addendum – Interacting with Administration

1. *During the past calendar year has the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President (or their respective offices) announced initiatives or goals or acted upon issues that fall under the charge of your Committee? If so, was your Committee consulted by the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President in a timely manner before the announcement or action? If not, do you believe your Committee should have been consulted? Would it have been helpful to have had the input of your Committee from the outset?*

The committee believes that the new Academic Integrity policy should be considered an academic policy, but we told it ‘belonged to the administration.’ Our committee (and other stakeholders) were given opportunity to learn about the new approach/policy and were given the opportunity to provide feedback, which was taken into account. So we did have a timely notice and an opportunity to provide feedback but were not engaged in shared governance in this instance.

1. *Did your Committee seek information or input from the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President or members of their staffs?   If so, did they respond adequately and in a timely manner?*

Our committee faced continual challenges with changes to the schedule, and the response from the registrar when seeking information was relatively prompt at the beginning of the semester but then stopped altogether. We did not seek any other information from other members of the administration. However, the chair of the committee served on the Policy Management Group, chaired by Dr. Muir, which provide a mechanism to connect adminstrators and administrative staff with faculty and other stakeholders – this arrangement works really well.

3. *Please suggest how you believe the President, Provost, Senior Vice President and/or their staffs might more effectively interact with your Committee in the future, if necessary.*

The committee does not have any suggestions at this time.

4. *Please relate any additional information you may have regarding interactions between your Committee and the President, Provost, Senior Vice President, or their staff.*

We had no contentious interactions; the only issue was the lack of response from the registrar late in the semester.