Admissions and Retention Policies Committee  
March 7th, 2005  
Minutes

Members present: Gary Levine (Chair), Jayne Geissler, Natalie Stewart, Randy Parker, Larry Seese, Carol Nichols, Wendy Sharer, Shahnaz Aziz, Christine Avenarius

Guest: Connie Blake, Registrar’s Office

Chair Gary Levine called the meeting to order at 4:10 pm. The minutes from the meeting of February 7th were distributed, reviewed and approved. A copy of the latest version of the “Class Attendance and Participation Regulations” based on revisions by Wendy Sharer were circulated. Additional material was also made available, such as copies of a handout to students by the ECU Student Health Service, and information on “Degrees with Distinction.” Christine Avenarius agreed to serve as secretary for the day.

Committee members read through the latest draft of the “Class Attendance and Participation Regulations.” Gary Levine asked members to detect any further errors or lack of clarity in the document. Randy Parker addressed the issue of unspecified number of days to be excused in case of a death in the family. Committee members agreed that the number of days excused should be left to the discretion of the office of the Provost or his/her designee. Natalie Stewart raised the issue that some instructors might want to allow a student to miss more than 10% of class meetings without repercussions. Committee members agreed to make changes to the effect that an instructor can allow more than 10% of absences but has to agree to allow at least 10% of absences. Larry Seese proposed to change the first sentence of paragraph 3 of the document as follows: “Excused absences accounting for a total of 10% or less of class meetings time should not lower a student’s course grade.”

Gary Levine then summed up the merits of the document. It protects students and faculty members, yet still allows room for contention in special cases. A motion was made and seconded to approve the new “Class Attendance and Participation Regulations”. The motion passed.

Next, the committee turned to a discussion of a resolution passed by the Faculty Senate to charge the Admissions and Retention Committee with a review of the current policy on “Graduation with Distinction.” The committee is asked to review the guidelines for this policy and to organize an open meeting date to allow interested students and faculty to speak about this issue with committee members. A short discussion on the meaning of this request ensued given that the committee had already reviewed and rejected requests by two students to change the policy on October 4th, 2004. Gary Levine reminded committee members that the Faculty Senate specifically requested the committee to set up an open meeting to hear opinions of students and faculty members regarding the “Graduation with Distinction” Policy. Committee members agreed to hold such a meeting on March 21st, 2005, the Monday after Spring Break.

Committee members then began a discussion on the policy in preparation for the open meeting and the final report to be presented to the Faculty Senate. Gary Levine asked about the purpose or need for ‘Graduation with Distinction’. Larry Seese made the comment that this distinction is a reward, not a career predictor. It does not make a university degree any more valuable. Wendy Sharer contributed that there are other options to represent a student’s achievement on his or her resume. GPA’s can be highlighted by junior and/or senior year. There are also other distinctions available for students, including for non-traditional students who may enter or reenter ECU under the forgiveness policy, such as being enrolled in the honors program, making the dean’s list or chancellor’s list, and achieving recognition as a specific department’s outstanding senior. According to the ECU catalogue “Graduation with Distinction” is the only recognition that is based solely on the cumulative GPA over the course of a student’s entire university career. The purpose lies in recognizing four years of work and serves as a motivator for students.

Jayne Geissler then raised the issue of where to draw a line for transfer students in terms of counting previous grades from transcripts towards their cumulative GPA. Larry Seese contributed the fact that a student who wants
to be considered for “Graduation with Distinction” from ECU only needs to have generated one half of all credit
hours needed for graduation at ECU. The other half can come from a different institution as long as the
cumulative GPA scores qualify for inclusion in the “Graduation with Distinction” program. Committee members
decided to look at the rules and regulations of other universities regarding “Graduation with Distinction.” Some
other universities in the North Carolina System have lower GPA standards for the basic level of distinction. For
example, elsewhere a ‘cum laude’ at NC State starts with a cumulative average of 3.25 instead of ECU’s 3.5.
This initiated a discussion of the comparability of GPAs and individual grades received at other institutions. Is
an “A” from one university and/or department equivalent to an “A” from a different university and/or
department? Many transfer students spend their first two years at other institutions and may experience different
conditions and requirements to be awarded an “A” in a course. This thought started a discussion of the
possibility to change ECU’s grading system to include a specification of +’s and −’s after the final letter grades.

The committee discussed if it is responsible for reopening the procedure to propose an inclusion of +’s and −’s
after final letter grades. Jayne Geissler asked if this would fall under the responsibilities of the Academic
Standard Committee. According to the print-out of the committee charge passed around the Admissions and
Retention committee should be the responsible for it. The committee decided to table further discussions until it
is clarified if this issue falls under its purview. However, members agreed that if this committee were eligible to
address the addition of +’s and −’s to final letter grades, it would take up the issue. No further discussion
occurred and the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.