March 16, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ray Hall, Chair, Academic Senate

FROM: Kathleen Dyer,

Chair, Department of Child and Family Science

RE: APM 231 – Policy on Adding and Dropping Classes

As a department chair, I struggle to abide by APM 231 regarding withdrawals from classes after the Census Date. I regularly confer with the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dr. Bernadette Muscat, about how to comply with the policy and still be reasonable and compassionate toward our struggling students.

APM 231 is based on the Executive Order No. 1037 (<https://calstate.policystat.com/policy/9438931/latest/>) which specifies that drops after Census are only to be allowed for “Serious and Compelling Reasons”. But our APM 231 goes on to define serious and compelling reasons as “an unexpected condition that is not present prior to enrollment in the course that unexpectedly arises and interferes with a students’ ability to attend class and/or complete course requirements.” This does not allow me any discretion as a chair to allow withdrawals that I believe to be reasonable. Recent examples include students who realize that they took and have credit for an equivalent class at a community college. They do not need the class at all, and cannot get credit for it. But by our definition, this does not qualify as “serious and compelling”. Another recent example is a student with a documented disability, who realized mid-semester that she simply could not keep up with the work because of her heavy course load.

I recommend removing the definition of serious and compelling from our definition because it prevents chairs from exercising reasonable discretion. I don’t think forcing these students to continue in their classes serves them in any way. Furthermore, the lifetime limit on number of units that can be withdrawal is still in place. So this change will simply allow a little more generosity and compassion while decreasing the hoops needed to jump through for that.

While we have this policy on the table, I would also like to propose a few additional modifications simply to clean it up. I make these suggestions in collaboration with Laura Yaeger in the Registrar’s Office, and Dr. Bernadette Muscat, Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

* Remove gendered language (he/she) and replace with gender-neutral pronouns (they)
* Remove references to physical signatures on forms, since the process is now administered online with digital approvals
* Reduce redundancy by combining the sections on dropping individual classes and dropping all classes. They don’t require separate sections, as there is simply one addition for all class that can just be added to the text.
* Change the path of appeals, so that they go to the Dean of Graduate or Undergraduate Studies (whichever is appropriate) rather than to the Dean of the academic college. Clarify that the dean’s approval may override a chair’s denial, as the EO says that requests “must be approved by the instructor, the chair, and/or the dean.”
* Remove the four-day period in between unrestricted drops and withdrawals for serious and compelling reasons by simply allowing unrestricted drops to extend through the 19th day of instruction, which is the day before Census. The four-day period was intended to force students to drop earlier so that other waiting students might be able to add before the deadline. However, it has worked for this purpose, as they need signatures for the drop, so it usually takes longer than four days anyway.

Thank you for considering making these changes to APM 231. I have attached a redlined copy of my proposals.