Academic Policy: The Role of the Registrar

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Session ID: T1.5
Presenters

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Discussion Topics

- Policy and procedure
- Who’s responsible?
- Creation
- Revision
- Enforcement
- Typical structures in higher education
  - Faculty committees
  - Registrar
- The good, the bad, and the frightening
Georgia Tech Basic Facts

• Public
• Located in Atlanta, GA
• Fall 2013 enrollment: Undergraduate – 14,559 Graduate – 6,915 (21,474 total), flat compared to Fall 2012
• Global presence
• 29 staff members in the Registrar’s Office
• RO reports to Vice Provost for Enrollment Services who reports to the Provost
• Usual array of functions, with the exception of classroom scheduling
Learning Outcomes

• Participants in this session will gain knowledge of how academic policy is developed, revised, and enforced and challenges that are typical in all three areas.

• Participants in this session will learn more about common structures and common roles in higher education, including the role the registrar can and should play.

• Participants in this session will learn about the role of technology and the role of staff and why two kinds of resources are critical to this process.
Policies and Procedures

- A set of policies are principles, rules, and guidelines formulated or adopted by an organization to reach its long-term goals and typically published in a booklet or other form that is widely accessible.

- Policies and procedures are designed to influence and determine all major decisions and actions, and all activities take place within the boundaries set by them.

- Procedures are the specific methods employed to express policies in action in day-to-day operations of the organization.

- Together, policies and procedures ensure that a point of view held by the governing body of an organization is translated into steps that result in an outcome compatible with that view.

Source: http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/policies-and-procedures.html
Academic Policy

Policies and Definitions
The academic policies and definitions listed below constitute some of the most frequently referenced University and school policies and guidelines, which are outlined in-depth in the University Bulletin under University Regulations or the Elliott School policies sections.

- Academic Integrity
- Academic Standing
- Audit
- Continuous Enrollment
- Dean's Honor List
- Drop/Withdrawal
- Electives
- Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Grades & Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Holds
- Incomplete Grade
- Internal Transfer Policy
- Leave of Absence
- Minimum Grade Policy
- Pass/No-Pass
- Repeating a Course
- Residence Requirement
- Transfer Credit
- Unauthorized Withdrawal ("Z" grade)
- Waiving Requirements

Source: George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs
Academic Policy

• Academic Integrity – You must know, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking examinations. Acts of academic dishonesty will be prosecuted through the proper University channels. You can review the University Code of Academic Integrity.

• Academic Standing – You must maintain good academic standing with the University. You are in good standing if your cumulative GPA is above 2.0. If your GPA is below 2.0, consult the Bulletin for information on probation and suspension.

• Audit – Auditing a course enables you to regularly attend a course without completing coursework or examinations. No credit is awarded, however, and standard tuition rates apply. You may not retake an audited course for credit. You may not change from credit to audit status, or vice versa, after the end of the eighth week of classes during the academic year.

• Continuous Enrollment – You must register for continuous enrollment for a semester in which you plan to pursue an off-campus academic opportunity (such as an internship, study at another institution, or the completion of incomplete coursework). Continuous enrollment status is generally limited to one academic year. Contact your advisor if you wish to register for continuous enrollment, or have questions about this status.

Source: George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs
Institutional Policies *versus* College, School or Departmental Policies

• At colleges and universities around the country, there are often jurisdictional layers or areas of control.
  – Institutional policy applies to all students
    • It is created by institutional level committees, is revised by institutional level committees, and is most often managed centrally (enforced) by the Registrar
    • College or school level policies applies to students enrolled in that academic unit
      – It is created by college or school level committees, is revised by college or school level committees, and is managed by the college or school and/or the Registrar
      – It is often the case, however, that creation of or revision to these policies has to also be vetted by the institutional level committee
Board of Regents and Accrediting Association

- Many institutions are part of a System of schools or are governed by a Board of Regents that have to approve curricular change.
- Academic policy may operate in a slightly different way, although changes to such things as the institution’s calendar system, for example, would likely be, at minimum, an informational item.
  - This really has to do with local policies that exist only at the institution.
  - If a change is made to a policy that is addressed by the BOR and/or the accrediting association, then it can’t be handled solely at the local level.
- Regional accrediting associations have specific requirements for academic policies that must be in place and published.
  - Substantive changes must be reported to the regional accrediting association.
Procedures

• A procedure is a series of steps followed in a specific order to accomplish a task.
  – A change of grade has to be done in a certain way, in a certain location, with other follow-up steps such as reviewing academic standing.
  – Procedures manuals or desk manuals exist to ensure that the correct steps are taken each time in the right order to make changes to a record or accomplish a task.
• The way a procedure operates is dictated by the policy. Procedural issues don’t drive policy; policy drives the creation and maintenance of procedures.
• The limitations of the student information system or how it operates also do not drive policy. However, as we all know more and more processes are handled within the SIS and adapting to academic policy is often not an easy task.

We sometimes conflate “policy” and “procedure”. The procedure is how we enforce the policy.
Assessment

• As with other things we do, keeping an assessment strategy in mind in regard to academic policy is a good thing.
  – Particularly with an academic policy that is difficult to implement, finding some way to assess its effectiveness can be a key to suggesting a revision or asking for another review.
  – Keeping a record of any unintended consequences that occur is another way to re-engage the conversation, if needed (sometimes the best of intentions lead to difficulties for students)
  – Reviewing academic policies on a regular basis to confirm or affirm their applicability to the current reality is a good process. What may sense on quarters may not make sense on semesters.
  – Sitting down with your office staff on a regular basis and running through the policies to get a sense of how things are working, or not, is also a good task to have on your list.
Structure and Process at Tech
Structure and Process at Tech

Our Faculty Handbook describes the committees and their duties.

Secretary of the Faculty

- A member of the General Faculty shall be appointed the Secretary of the Faculty by the President on the recommendation of the General Faculty Assembly to serve as a permanent secretary of the various Faculty bodies: the General Faculty, the General Faculty Assembly, the Academic Faculty, the Academic Senate, and the Executive Board.

- The Secretary shall not serve concurrently as a representative to a faculty body nor as a member of a standing committee and shall be given appropriate released time funded by the Administration.

Duties

- Keep minutes and records.
- Post the minutes of the various bodies.
- Accept the Nominating Committee reports from the Executive Board.
- Under the supervision of the Executive Board, conduct the elections to fill faculty governance positions addressed by the Nominating Committee. In these elections, voters will indicate their preference for as many candidates as necessary to fill the indicated openings. Elections from these slates will be determined by the highest vote totals from the pool of candidates for each office.
Appointed by the President, the Policy Steering Committee is the Institute body that oversees the development of Institute-level policies at Georgia Tech. It is a collaborative body that includes representatives from faculty, students, and staff. To reach the Policy Steering Committee, please contact the Institute Policy Specialist (policylibrary@gatech.edu).

The Policy Steering Committee is responsible for:

1. Determining policy need & type, Academic or Administrative, and whether revisions are editorial or substantial.
2. Reviewing and approving proposed Administrative policies and changes to current Administrative policy, as described in the Institute Policy Development and Life Cycle Process.
3. Facilitating communication between Academic and Administrative policy stakeholders during policy review
4. Ensuring that there is an effective and appropriate communication plan in place to make the affected campus constituents aware of policy changes.

The Policy Steering Committee members are:

- Secretary of Faculty
- Chair, Faculty Statutes Committee
- Assistant Vice Provost, Academic Affairs
- Assistant Vice President, Research Administration
- Dean of Students
- Undergraduate Student Body Representative
- Graduate Student Body Representative
- Registrar
- Senior Director, Employee Relations
- Chief Information Security Officer, OIT Information Security
- Assistant Vice President, Administration and Finance
- Vice President, Legal Affairs and Risk Management
- Director, Compliance and Policy Management

The Policy Steering Committee charter can be found here.
Structure at Georgia Tech

• Student Regulations Committee
  – Standing Committee of the Faculty
  – Registrar and VP for Student Affairs *ex officio* members
  – Has jurisdiction over the Rules and Regulations section of the *Catalog*
    – Current members include *former* members of the curriculum committee

• Curriculum Committees
  – Undergraduate
  – Graduate
    • Standing Committees of the Faculty
    • Elected membership
    • Registrar serves as Secretary
    • Registrar’s Office provides administrative support
Structure at Georgia Tech

**Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee:**

The Committee shall annually review and make appropriate recommendations to the Academic Faculty concerning:

- The system for academic advising;
- Policy governing the academic standing and classification of Students;
- Both graduate and undergraduate financial aid programs;
- The counseling and career planning program; and
- The orientation program for new Students.

In addition, the Committee shall:

- ..... 
- Approve all intercollegiate schedules of extracurricular activities, such as athletics and debate, including post season athletic events.
- Approve all institutional functions for which excused absences from classes for the Students involved are to be granted.
Structure at Georgia Tech

• There are times when academic policy discussions need to involve both the curriculum committee and the student regulations committee.
• Sometimes a question about an academic policy will come out of the curriculum committee and be directed to the regulations committee.
• Sometimes a question will be raised through the regulations committee and be sent to the curriculum committee for its input.
• The registrar’s office staff member, usually the Registrar, tries to be mindful of this and help both committees keep the other in mind for possible collaboration.
Role of the Registrar at Tech

- **Student Regulations Committee**
  - *Ex officio* member
  - There as a subject matter expert
  - Agree with the non-voting role (the person who enforces the rules shouldn’t be the one who helps make them)
  - Is a primary provider of work for this committee
  - Each year, the RO suggests policy revisions or new policies
  - Registrar and at least one staff member, usually the person responsible for the Catalog, attend the meetings
  - Serves as “back-up” secretary for the committee
  - Primary editor of Minutes to make certain that any recommended changes to policy are very clear
  - Serves as back-up presenter of action items at the Academic Senate meetings
  - Typically drafts the annual report for the Chair
  - Assists the Chair of the committee as requested
Role of the Registrar at Tech

- **Student Regulations Committee**
  - Is a primary provider of work for this committee
  - Each year, the RO suggests policy revisions or new policies
  - Why is this the case?
    - Input from students about what appears to be broken
    - Input from faculty on campus about what appears to be broken or needed
    - Input from RO staff about policies that are confusing and hard to explain, and or hard to enforce
    - Aware of “procedures” that have somehow become “policies” and that need to be officially approved
    - Able to capture “unwritten rules” or “we’ve always done it that way” and take them in for official review and approval
    - On-going conversations with other offices such as the Dean of Students where questions often arise about policies
Role of the Registrar

• Universally speaking, what can and should the role of the registrar be in academic policy creation, revision, and enforcement?
  – Subject matter expert
  – Administrative expertise
  – Knowledge of the technology and what it can and can’t do
  – Expertise in knowing interconnectedness with other policies or the curriculum
  – Providing clarity of thought, clarity of purpose
  – Asking good questions about what problem or issue the policy is intended to solve or address
  – Providing insight into implementation issues, can the policy be enforced in an efficient way? If not, what are the implications?
What makes a good academic policy a good academic policy?

• It is clear
• It makes sense
• It can be explained without a slide rule, super-computer, or hand puppets
• It can be applied consistently
• It does not contradict any other policy
• It does not contradict any policy of the Board of Regents, the accrediting association, or any other important group
• It is documented in the Catalog (Bulletin)
• It was approved by the faculty committee on campus that has the authority to do so
XX. Student Academic Grievance Procedures

The procedures set forth here are intended to provide students at the Georgia Institute of Technology a means for setting forth grievances relating to academic matters, intellectual diversity, and grade disputes when the student believes that an instructor has acted unfairly or improperly in assignment of grades. It is not the intention of these procedures to provide a forum for questioning the judgment or grading policies of faculty. Student concerns may be discussed with the faculty member and/or reported to the school or unit head, the academic deans, of the Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

A. Applicability of the Grievance Procedures

Subject Matter:
These procedures apply to the review of grievances concerning academic matters and grade disputes. Grade appeals must be initiated by the grievant within their next enrolled term following the term of the course in question, and best efforts should be applied to resolve the appeal within that term.

Grievant:
These procedures shall be the appellate procedures for students at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Students who have pursued a formal grievance procedure or who have pursued informally the resolution of a grievance in their own school, college, or unit and have had that appeal dismissed, may submit the grievance for review under these procedures.

Source: http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/20a.php (Georgia Tech)
What makes a bad academic policy a bad academic policy?

• The actual purpose that it serves is unclear
• No-one remembers why it was there to begin with
• Every time you look at it, you see something else that is wrong or unclear
• The institution or unit does not really want it enforced; it exists “in case” someone needs it
• The language in it is unclear and/or clumsy
• It is difficult to explain
• It is difficult to implement
• It is difficult to apply consistently
• It has consequences other than what was intended
• It appears to contradict other policies
• It is inconsistent with other policies
Extracurricular Activities

Exampled of a bad policy from GT.
XVII. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

E. INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS REGULATIONS

1. To be eligible for intercollegiate athletic competition, a student must satisfy the following requirements:
   a. be eligible to participate in extracurricular activities, as defined in section XVII.A;
   b. be carrying a full-time workload as defined in section VILA;
   c. be making satisfactory progress toward a degree, and
   d. meet any further requirements of the NCAA or other governing organization; see the athletic director for details.

2. No student may be excused from regularly scheduled classes for athletic practice.

3. No student may participate in more than two sports in intercollegiate competition in any school year, except by permission of the Division of Student Affairs. Being manager or assistant manager is counted as participation within the meaning of this rule.
Institute Approved Absences

1. Purpose
2. Academic Calendar
3. Notices
4. Attendance
   A. General
   B. Class Attendance
5. Grades / Average
6. Scholastic Regulations
7. Deficiencies
8. Withdrawal/Readmission
9. Scheduling
10. Pass/Fail System
11. Cross Enrollment
12. Examinations
13. Undergraduate Degrees
14. Graduate Degrees
15. Student Vehicles
16. Medical Regulations
17. Extracurricular
18. Academic Honor Code
19. Code of Conduct
20. Grievance Procedures
21. Exceptions

IV. ATTENDANCE

B. CLASS ATTENDANCE

1. There are no formal institutional regulations regarding class attendance at the Georgia Institute of Technology. The resources of the Institute are provided for the intellectual growth and development of the students who attend. A schedule of courses is provided for the students and faculty to facilitate an orderly arrangement of the program of instruction. The fact that classes are scheduled is evidence that attendance is important; students should, therefore, maintain regular attendance if they are to attain maximum success in the pursuit of their studies.

2. All students are responsible for obtaining an understanding of each instructor’s policy regarding absences; all students are expected to attend announced quizzes, laboratory periods, and final examinations. Although it is recognized that occasionally it may be necessary for students to be absent from scheduled classes or laboratories for personal reasons, including major religious observances, students are responsible for all material covered in their absence, and they are responsible for the academic consequences of their absences. Students should discuss planned absences with their instructors as soon as possible after the beginning of an academic term. Work missed may be made up at the discretion of the instructors.

3. Students who are absent because of participation in approved Institute activities (such as field trips and athletic events) will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absences. Approval of such activities will be granted by the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate, and statements of the approved absence may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar.
Recognized Student Organizations
Frankenpolicy
What do we mean by “Frankenpolicy”?

• This is what happens when a “compromise” is reached.
• This typically happens when one group really wants a policy and advocates for it, but is opposed by an equally vocal group.
• Grappling and debate usually go on for a while.
• Draft after draft after draft may be presented and reviewed.
• The committee that has jurisdiction over it spends hours and hours on it.
• Finally, after a “final draft” is prepared, the word-smithing kicks in again.
• Finally, a “compromise” is reached. A monster, a beast, is created.
V. Grades and Scholastic Average

C. Grade Substitution

– Effective with the entering Fall 2005 first-time freshman class.
– First-time freshman students who receive a grade of D or F in a course within their first two terms in residence (first three terms for those who begin in the Freshman Summer Session) are eligible to repeat the course and have the original grade excluded from the computation of the academic average. Grade substitution may be used only once per course, with a maximum of two courses total.
– The course must be repeated at Georgia Tech within the student's first four terms in residence (first five terms for those who begin in the Freshman Summer Session). The application for grade substitution must be filed with the Registrar's Office no later than the deadline for withdrawing from a course during the student's next term in residence after the course is repeated.
– The original course and grade will continue to appear on the student's transcript, with a notation that the course was repeated and that the original grade is not included in computation of the academic average. Credit for the course will be counted only once.
– If the revised academic average results in a change in academic standing for any term, then the revised standing will be reflected on the student's transcript. If standing is changed from "Dismissal" to a higher standing, it will be recorded as "standing from Dismissal" and the dismissal will continue to be counted with respect to regulations and policies related to Withdrawal and Readmission.
– A course is not eligible for grade substitution if the student was found responsible for any academic misconduct in that course regardless of how many times it is repeated.
– The grade substitution policy (including, but not limited to, course eligibility, number of courses, time limits, and deadlines) is not subject to exceptions and may not be petitioned to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.
Freshman Forgiveness at The Ohio State

- The Freshman Forgiveness Rule is intended to provide students who need the chance to repeat, under special terms, some courses in which they performed poorly during their first year of university course work.

- If you receive a D+, D, or E in a course or courses during your freshman year (before you have earned 30 credit hours), you may retake the course, and the first grade will be dropped from your cumulative grade-point average (GPA). The record of the original grade will remain visible on your transcript.

- You may retake the course only once, and you must retake it at Ohio State before you earn 60 hours. If you earn a worse grade the second time, that grade counts, not the higher grade, and if you earn an E in place of a D or D+, you will lose credit for the course. You can use the forgiveness rule for up to 15 credit hours. It is best to retake the course(s) as early as possible.

- Note that credit hours earned by examination (EM credit) do not count in calculating earned hours to determine eligibility for the Freshman Forgiveness Rule; transfer credit hours generally count.

- Keep in mind that if you are considering applying to graduate or professional schools, or even to other undergraduate colleges (or schools) at Ohio State, all of your grades will be considered (including those forgiven under the Freshman Forgiveness Rule) in the admission process, and the unit considering your application may recalculate the original grade(s) into your cumulative GPA.
Wright State University Replacing Grades

Wright State University
Repeating Courses and Replacing Grades Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT POLICY</th>
<th>REVISED POLICY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repeating Courses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Repeating Courses and Replacing Grades</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses counted as part of the first 45 credit hours (including transfer hours) can be repeated if the grade earned was a D, F, or X. The course may be repeated until the student has achieved a grade of at least a C. Only the last attempt for each course will be counted in the cumulative GPA, as long as it is completed no later than the quarter in which the first 60 credit hours are earned (exception: or until the course is offered again, if ever, during the regular academic year). However, each grade received for a repeated course will become a part of the student’s permanent record.</td>
<td>For courses in which a grade of B, C, D, F, or X has been earned, a student may repeat one or more courses with grade replacement up to a cumulative total of five grade replacements. For these courses, only the grade for the last attempt will be counted in the hours earned and cumulative GPA. However, every grade received for a repeated course will become a part of the student’s permanent record.</td>
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<tr>
<td>After the first 45 hours (including transfer hours), students may repeat any course in which they earned a grade of D, F, or X until they have achieved at least a grade of C. Each grade will become part of the permanent record and will be counted in the cumulative GPA.</td>
<td>A course with fixed content can be retaken to affect the student’s cumulative GPA. A course is considered a repeat with grade replacement when a student earns a grade of B, C, D, F, or X for the course and retakes the course resulting in a grade of A, B, C, D, F, or X. All such courses will be counted toward the five-course maximum. Withdrawals (W) are not counted as repeats.</td>
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<td>Students may repeat courses in which they have earned a grade of A, B, or C in order to increase their knowledge or to meet program requirements, but the hours and points for the repeat will not be calculated in their hours earned or in the determination of their cumulative GPA. Neither will the hours or points be used to meet graduation requirements.</td>
<td>During the term in which a student reaches the fifth repeat with replacement, should more than the fifth repeat be in progress, the course(s) with the greater number of credit hours will be applied toward the five repetitions. If there is no difference in credit hours, the course(s) in which the grade has (have) improved the most will be applied.</td>
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<td>Students in those program units where the repeat policy is more lenient than that of the</td>
<td>For all courses repeated after a student has reached the maximum of five repetitions, each grade will be counted in the cumulative GPA. Credit hours earned will be counted only once.</td>
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Zombie Apocalypse Policies?
Closing Thoughts

1. Don’t confuse us with the facts.
2. Tread carefully.
Questions?
Use Mobile Guidebook to Evaluate this Session
Contact Information

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  — http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/2.-faculty-governance
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  — http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/5c.php
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  — http://advising.osu.edu/freshmanforgiveness.shtml
• Wright State University Replacing Grades Policy
  — http://www.wright.edu/uacpc/0011/fsreport/RepeatingCoursesAndReplacingGradesPolicy.pdf