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## Scholastic minutes 10/30/2003

Scholastic Committee

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University of Minnesota, Morris  
Scholastic Committee  
Minutes #6, October 30, 2003

The Scholastic Committee met on October 30 in the Community Services Conference Room. The next meeting will be on November 13<sup>th</sup> in the same location.

Members present: Burbank, Cox, Crandall, Kate Ellis, Fisher, Heyman, McPhee, McQuarrie, Meek (Chair), R. Richards, Ropp, T. Faux, K. Klinger (Coordinator), Thielke  
Guests: Chancellor Schuman, Vice-Chancellor Olson-Loy, Professor OLoughlin, L. Schulz.

The meeting was set aside to discuss academic progress requirements in relation to the financial aid progress requirements (SAP). We had spent a previous meeting discussing the implications of moving to one set of criteria for both purposes. The Committee concluded that it would not be wise to adopt SAP guidelines to use as UMM academic probation and suspension rules, since SAP is more prohibitive than our current guidelines about what is counted as an incomplete course. Other problems with moving to one set of criteria are documented in October 23rd minutes. In response to her written inquiries, Chair Meek heard from Sue Van Voorhis, UM Registrar, and Vice-Chancellor Schwaller heard from Craig Swan, Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education, that there was no need to bring the academic and financial aid policies in line with each other. In fact, they argued against it. These emails had been shared with our guests.

A primary concern among UMM administrators and the Scholastic Committee has been the confusion caused by students receiving separate letters of suspension and probation from two different offices. The Scholastic Committee agrees that notification to the students about two kinds of probation/ suspension is a problem. We concluded that, if the notification process can be combined and streamlined, then the major problem associated with having two policies will be solved. A plan for notification evolved through discussions among Lynn Schulz, Marie Hagen, and Dorothy DeJager, the three staff most involved in implementing suspension:

Notification Plan: We recommend that the timing of notifications to students from both offices should be simultaneous, that the messages sent should make clear which suspension or probation students are receiving, and that duplication of notification should be eliminated.

1. In May, PeopleSoft will generate an all-University report that will be sent to Marie Hagen that lists students who have a negative service indicator on their record for financial aid purposes. At the same time, Lynn Schulz will run an Excel report using Scholastic Committee academic progress criteria.
2. Using the PeopleSoft Negative Service Indicator report, Hagen will create an Excel spreadsheet listing those students suspended or on probation for failure to meet financial aid criteria. Using the report from Schulz, De Jager will sort and mark students to be suspended or placed on probation using SC criteria. Following this, Hagen and De Jager will send their lists of suspended students and students placed on probation to Schulz.
3. Schulz will merge this information in a new data base that lists each student one time only, by ID number, and identifies all criteria categories not met—SC, FA, or both.
4. Notifications of probation or suspension will be sent at the same time. Three letters will be prepared: one to those students who have not met financial aid criteria; another to those students who have not met Scholastic Committee criteria; and a third to those students who don't meet SC

and FA criteria. Telephone contact numbers will be in the letterhead used, as well as listed in the body of the letters.

Chancellor Schuman did not argue that the criteria should be the same. He is bothered that our Scholastic Committee criteria are lower than those of financial aid, but he believes they are good criteria, some of the clearest we have had for some time. He responded that what the Scholastic Committee has proposed is satisfactory. He has three other concerns:

1. Some office must rigorously check the financial aid academic progress of students receiving aid. It is acceptable to him that this be done by the Financial Aid Office staff.
2. Students need to be notified clearly with one voice about their status in both academic progress systems. Any student in trouble must be notified. Schuman noted that part of the problem originates with the federal government's insistence that we use the term *academic progress* and *suspension* for financial aid. We need language to make both sets of standards clearer to students and to faculty. He suggests that UMM look for new terminology, such as *instructional progress* or *academic eligibility*.
3. Schuman is least comfortable with whether advisers or instructors are able to explain both sets of standards to advisees. Institutionally, UMM is responsible for promulgating awareness of them.

The discussion that followed covered several related topics.

Klinger, who oversees the suspension system, noted that academic progress criteria based on both GPA and cumulative completion ratio were introduced in 1997 and worked reasonably well until the move to semesters in 1999. However, with the absence of a cumulative completion ratio on the transcript with the move to People Soft, and with the problems in its calculation caused by a new formula, the Scholastic Committee used only the GPA as a criterion, beginning in Spring 2000. Beginning in 2002-2003, the Assembly approved a new set of criteria officially based on GPA only. The implications of the absence of the completion ratio for financial aid did not become obvious until spring 2003.

Vice-Chancellor Olson-Lay noted that 80% of UMM students need financial aid. It is very important that they receive information about the criteria of both systems up front. Students shouldn't drift.

We discussed what would be considered reasonable responsibilities for advisers. Advisers should be able to answer generic questions. Questions related to individual students would be referred to Financial Aid staff. In a similar situation, Schuman referred often to a printed sheet with the criteria printed on them. We could certainly provide faculty and advisers with a summary of both criteria.

The point was made that we are going through a culture change. The federal government will punish students and colleges for not graduating on time. With the new importance of the cumulative completion ratio, faculty need to be encouraged to think carefully before they give an *I* for *incomplete* and students need to think carefully before withdrawing. Drop periods may need to be announced more aggressively through a thorough publicity campaign.

Several questions were raised about the calculation of the completion ratio, whether transfer credits are included in it or whether the calculation is based on UM credits only. We touched briefly on whether the appeal processes should be integrated and what the criteria for a successful SAP appeal should be. We agreed that we should maintain two sets of appeals. However, as long as there are two sets of criteria and two appeal processes, clear communication will be essential.

Meek thanked our guests for participating. The meeting was adjourned.

