



OFFICE OF  
UNDERGRADUATE  
STUDIES

**AUBURN UNIVERSITY**

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

January 22, 2016

To: Larry Teeter, Chair, University Senate

From: Constance C. Relihan, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies

Subject: Proposal to Revise the Course Withdrawal Policy

During Fall 2015, a small ad hoc subcommittee of the Academic Affairs group examined possible revisions to Auburn University's course withdrawal policy. The impetus for this review came from the Strategic Plan's call to examine academic policies that might be impeding student academic progress. I have attached here the documents they produced during their review.

The recommendation presented by the ad hoc committee was discussed and amended by the Academic Affairs committee on January 13. (Attached to this memo are the documents on which that discussion was based.) The revised recommendation that I am forwarding on behalf of Academic Affairs is:

The withdrawal deadline for fall and spring semesters should be moved to the last business day prior to the opening of course registration for the following term. This proposed deadline would move the date to approximately week 11 of the semester. This would make Auburn's policy more consistent with other institutions.

The proposed change would provide faculty with more time to provide graded feedback to students prior to the withdrawal deadline and would give students more time to adjust their study habits (if necessary) in light of such feedback before needed to decide whether to withdraw from a course.

If the recommendation were to be approved by the Senate without further revision, the Undergraduate Course Withdrawal Policy would read as follow (additions in bold):

No grade penalty is assigned for dropping a course on or before ~~mid-term~~ **the last business day prior to the opening of registration for the following term**. A student who withdraws from a course prior to the 15th class day during fall or spring semester will have no grade assignment; however, after the first 15 days a W (Withdrawn Passing) grade will be recorded for the course. For the summer terms, all withdrawals with no W grade assignment must be processed prior to the fifth class day.

A course may be dropped with a W after ~~midterm~~ **the mid-semester withdrawal deadline** only under unusual conditions such as serious illness of the student, serious illness or death of a member of the student's immediate family or other seriously disruptive circumstances. When approval for dropping the course under such circumstances is granted by the student's dean, a W may be assigned only when the instructor indicates that the student is clearly passing the course. Otherwise, a grade of WF (Withdrawn Failing) is assigned.

I hope that the Senate Leadership will consider this recommendation and forward it to the appropriate Senate committee for formal review. I will be happy to provide more information about the proposal should you wish.



To: Constance Relihan, Associate Provost  
Academic Affairs Committee  
From: Paul Patterson  
Date: November 20, 2015  
Subject: Proposal to Move Course Withdrawal Deadline

The *ad hoc* committee established to evaluate a proposal to move the deadline for withdrawing from a course met on November 18, 2015. A copy of the proposal shared with Academic Affairs on October 21, 2015 is attached. Those joining me for this meeting included Susan Villaume, Anna Burchett, Marybrownlee Couch, Dana Jablonski, and Ricky Causey.

The *ad hoc* committee reviewed the comments on this proposal offered by the Practical Advising Committee. Dr. Villaume attended this meeting on November 17, along with Burchett and Couch. The comments on the specific elements of the proposal are outlined below.

#### Practical Advising Views

1. Withdrawal Deadline: The Practical Advising Committee supported moving the withdrawal deadline to later in the semester. They recommended that the withdrawal deadline be moved to the last class day of October in fall and the last class day of March for spring to align this action with the proposed time to begin registration (first class day of November and April). Student should have made this decision before registering for the subsequent semester.
2. Required Advising: The Practical Advising Committee was not supportive of the recommendation to require advising for students seeking to withdraw from a course after the census date. They felt that it should be encouraged, but not necessarily required.
3. Limit on the Number of Withdrawals: The Practical Advising Committee was not supportive of the recommendation to limit the number of withdrawals allowed during a student's tenure at the university. They felt it would be problematic to enforce.

#### Regional and Peer Institutions

After discussing the input offered by the Practical Advising Committee, the *ad hoc* committee reviewed information on course withdrawal policies collected by Dr. Villaume from other peer and regional institutions. The attached table summarizes this information. Among the institutions evaluated, withdrawal deadlines during the 11<sup>th</sup> week of the semester appear to be the most common. Among the 17 institutions investigated, only the University of Florida and Louisiana State University impose limits on the number of withdrawals that are allowed.

Based on this input from the information provided by Dr. Villaume and the Practical Advising Committee, the *ad hoc* committee has the following recommendations:



## Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations

1. Withdrawal Deadline: The committee recommends adopting the Practical Advising Committee's recommendation on the withdrawal deadline for fall and spring semesters (last class day of October and last class day of March). This proposed deadline would move the date to approximately week 11 of the semester. This would make Auburn's policy more consistent with other institutions.
2. Required Advising: The committee similarly did not feel that advising should be required for this action. However, it felt that it should be encouraged.
3. Limit on the Number of Withdrawals: The committee also did not feel that a limit should be placed on the number of withdrawals a student may execute.

The committee felt that with regard to academic rigor or institutional reputation, there was no hazard in extending the withdrawal deadline. Providing students with more time to make an informed decision was considered to be very prudent.

With regard to the students making course withdrawals, the committee did feel that there was a strong role for advisors in educating students about the implications of these actions both on their academic progress and the perceptions some employers and graduate or professional programs have about numerous course withdrawals appearing on a student's transcript. However, the committee felt that on this type of issue, education, rather than legislation is a preferred approach.

The committee discussed a number of other academic policies and advising issue related to course withdrawals that the committee feels should be further discussed by Academic Affairs and other academic policy and advising groups on campus. These items are listed below.

## Other Policies for Consideration

1. Eliminate WF Grade: The committee discussed the role of the WF as a grading option. Given that WF is rarely awarded ("under unusual conditions and with special permission") and is calculated as a failing grade (F), it is unclear why the grade of WF is needed.
2. Audit Options: The committee recommended that students who do withdraw after census, but before the withdrawal deadline be provided the option to continue attending the class to be exposed the course material and to prepare them for future course attempts. It was discussed that this may require the student to change his/her registration status to auditor, which would require instructor approval through the schedule adjustment process.
3. Grade Adjustment Policy: Given that the one constraint related to academic progress and academic standing has been relaxed, the committee questioned whether other related policies should be revisited. Specifically, should the spirit and intent of the grade adjustment policy be revisited? There was a recommendation that the use of this policy should be limited to a certain number credit hours earned at the institution (e.g. the first 30 earned credit hours).



## Withdrawal Policy Discussion

Academic Affairs

October 21, 2015

Issue: Despite concerted efforts to provide students more information through the early warning programming activities, students may still not have enough information to make a prudent decision on dropping a class before the current midterm deadline. The current deadline itself may also be exerting timer pressure on students leading to less than optimal decisions. This is a decision that students should make in a calculated and thoughtful manner, as it will have an impact on their progress towards graduating from Auburn University. It is believed that students would benefit from discussing their plans to drop a course after the census date with an advisor. Furthermore, a policy on limiting the number of course drops (withdrawals) may provide some additional discipline on this important decision and contribute to improved time-to-graduation outcomes.

Proposal: (1) It is proposed that the current midterm (mid-semester) deadline for dropping a course after census and receiving a W be extend to a later date. (2) It is proposed that students be required to discuss these after census withdrawals with an advisor before they are initiated. (3) It is proposed that a limit on the number of after census withdrawals during the student's tenure at Auburn be established.

Consider the following sample language for the withdrawal policy:

*Students who withdraw after census and on or before the designated course withdrawal deadline mid-semester in spring or fall or mid-term in the summer will have a grade of W for the course recorded on the transcript. Grades of W are not used in calculating the term or cumulative GPA at Auburn University. The designated course withdrawal deadline is available in the official semester calendar. After census withdrawals will require consultation with the student's advisor. An undergraduate student may withdraw from a cumulative total of no more than four (4) courses after the posted census date (15<sup>th</sup> class day in spring and fall) during their undergraduate career, excluding summer term. Withdrawals for medical, compassionate, or personal reasons are not included in this limit.*

It is recommended that the withdrawal deadline be set for two weeks after mid-semester for fall and spring semester. Summer withdrawal deadlines will remain the same (midterm). A limit of four post-census withdrawals is recommended. Withdrawals during summer are not counted in this limit.



## Course Withdrawal Policy

INSTITUTION (LINKS TO POLICIES BELOW)	LAST DAY	CAP ON WITHDRAWALS?
<a href="#"><u>UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA</u></a>	End of 10 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA</u></a>	End of 10 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA</u></a>		two drops in their first 60 credit hours attempted at UF: two additional drops in the second 60 credit hours. Unused drops do not carry over from the freshman/sophomore years to the junior/senior years; Students transferring to UF with an A.A. degree from a Florida public community college or with 60 or more transfer credits earned from another college or university get only two drops: Students who can document extenuating circumstances may petition their college for additional drops
<a href="#"><u>UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY</u></a>	End of 11 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI</u></a>	End of 5 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA</u></a>	End of 7 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE</u></a>	None Found	None Found
<a href="#"><u>VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY</u></a>	End of 9 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS</u></a>	End of 14 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY</u></a>	End of 11 <sup>th</sup> Week	Three W's allowed for 0-59 credit hours. Three W's allowed for 60-119 credit hours. One W allowed for >119 credit hours.
<a href="#"><u>UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI</u></a>	Beginning of 7 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY</u></a>	End of 8 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>TEXAS A&amp;M UNIVERSITY</u></a>	End of 12 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>CLEMSON</u></a>	Beginning of 11 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>SAMFORD</u></a>	End of 8 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>TROY UNIVERSITY</u></a>	Beginning of 11 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found
<a href="#"><u>JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY</u></a>	Without Academic Penalty: End of 10 <sup>th</sup> Week  With Academic Penalty: End of 12 <sup>th</sup> Week	None Found