**Provost’s Council Minutes**  
*October 22, 2020*

**In Attendance:** P Campbell, N Choudhury, J Connell, D Couzens, R Doster, S Gaulden, J Gronbeck-Tedesco, S Hangen, L Keller, G Khaneja, T Laprey, A LePore, A Lorenz, D Nast, F Papalia, E Petkus, E Rainforth, S Rice, C Romano, E Saiff, S Shrestha, and N Varma

 Approval of Minutes:

The minutes from the **September 24, 2020** Provost’s Council meeting were approved with the following changes: 1) A new location for Laptop Upcycle will hopefully be established at Ramapo by Fall 2021 rather than by the end of this academic year; and 2) E Saiff’s name should to be added to the Integrity of Degree Programs Research Group.

**Report from the Provost:**

The Provost shared a request that has repeatedly been put forth by the SGA President recently. A Patel is asking the College to consider reinstituting the Emergency Pass/Fail Grading Policy that was adopted in Spring 2020 because of the abrupt transition to remote learning caused by the pandemic. The Provost’s Council discussed whether to allow the pass/fail grading option and were concerned that pass/fail grading might encourage students to not try their hardest in classes and might also become an issue for students who apply to graduate programs. *(NOTE: Our normal policy allows students to opt into pass/fail grading for free-elective courses by a date established in the academic calendar and can only be requested for a total of four credits in any semester and for a total of no more than four out of each 12 credits earned for a grade.)*

The majority present felt that emergency pass/fail grading should be allowed only if the mode of course delivery abruptly and unexpectedly shifts. N Varma reminded all that the incomplete grade is an option already. A LePore stated that she prefers faculty be gentle with grading and generously offer incompletes as warranted. N Choudhury said she will bring this to FAEC. D Nast expressed he would support offering pass/fail grading to offset the pressure students are feeling with virtual courses. S Gaulden shared a summary of what other COPLAC institutions are doing (i.e., most are back to their normal grading systems). S Shrestha said that some students had trouble joining class sessions and some international students are having issues with the time differences. The final consensus was to not reinstitute emergency pass/fail grading at this point in time given the circumstances.

The Provost shared that the Spring 2021 course schedule was uploaded into Banner. This occurred after a PowerPoint presentation and two WebEx meetings with faculty were held to define course delivery modes and to explain the census-to-Banner process. Registration for the
spring semester opens November 16th, and applying for spring semester housing will open on November 17th. This information will be shared by S Gaulden and C Romano at a town hall for students, which is scheduled for November 5th.

P Campbell asked to be sure to include notice that studio spaces and CA labs will be open for student use in Spring 2021. E Rainforth shared that terminology/definitions (e.g., hybrid) are not being used consistently across the College. N Choudhury suggested final review of Banner course entries be conducted off-line prior to them going live/being viewable. S Gaulden explained that Banner has some limitations, but she is open to suggestions (please email them to her).

The Provost discussed that changes to Spring Break may occur. The options under consideration include the following: 1) keeping the Spring 2021 semester calendar exactly as is; 2) beginning the Spring 2021 semester one week later, eliminating Spring Break, and ending the semester as scheduled; 3) beginning the Spring 2021 semester on time, eliminating Spring Break, and ending the semester one week early; or 4) beginning and ending the Spring 2021 semester as scheduled, eliminating the 5-consecutive-day version of Spring Break, and spreading the five days off through weeks six to ten. E Saiff shared the last option would cause issues with the science labs (e.g., set ups, connection to the lecture content, ordering schedule). A LePore is concerned the changes could cause issues with faculty furlough days and may cause ineligibility for unemployment. S Gaulden will share these concerns with Cabinet and V Galdieri.

POLICIES/PROCEDURES TO BE REVIEWED & DISCUSSED

Policies/Procedures to be Revisited/Clarified:

- Policy/Procedure 300-OO Grading System

  Issue: A recommendation was made in September to allow the Y grade to be assigned for zero-credit courses that count toward degree requirements (e.g., Career Pathways courses, THEA 021 – Running Crew I, THEA 022 – Running Crew II). In AY 2019-2020, 8% of students received F grades for Pathways modules. (NOTE: Pathways are graded P/F.)

  Meeting Notes: The suggested edits of the Policy/Procedure were reviewed and unanimously approved. The changes will take effect in Fall 2021 and will be included in the AY 2021-2022 College Catalog.

  Additional changes to the Policy/Procedure should be brought forth at a Provost’s Council meeting this year because the MSN and DNP courses utilize a grading system
that is different from this one. An exception clause should be added to the Graduate Grading System section in the Procedure.

- **Policy/Procedure 300-P Graduation with Distinction for Baccalaureate Degree Recipients**

  **Issues:** Four possible revisions to this Policy/Procedure were suggested and discussed at the June 25, 2020 Provost’s Council meeting, but consensus was not reached. Additional discussions have occurred since then, and a final draft incorporating these suggestions was shared.

  **Meeting Notes:** The suggested changes to the Policy/Procedure were discussed. E Saiff brought up his concerns that this version may still not be equitable and may disadvantage those who attended Ramapo College for all four years. He suggested establishing a “last number of credits” for which the GPA would be calculated for all Ramapo students to determine eligibility for Latin Honors. N Choudhury asked whether students are aware of the current expectations (i.e., are they spelled out in the Student Handbook – S Gaulden checked and found out that most academic policies are not included in this Handbook). Consensus was not reached, so the suggested revisions will be further discussed at the November Provost’s Council meeting.

- **Policy/Procedure 300-HH Teaching Overload**

  **Issues:** Human Resources requested changes/updates to this Policy/Procedure and a draft was reviewed at the February 27, 2020 Provost’s Council meeting. Additional revisions have since been put forth, but no consensus has been reached. The biggest “sticking point” is the Managers and Staff Who Do Not Teach as Part of Their Primary Responsibility section, which the Provost’s Council is not sure belongs in an academic policy.

  **Meeting Notes:** Several members of the Provost’s Council asked whether “Teaching Overload” would be applicable to managers and staff who do not even have a teaching load assigned to them but who do teach. S Gaulden and C Romano expressed they do not think that the term “overload” is applicable even though the College pays these individuals at the “overload” rate. The consensus was that the Managers and Staff Who Do Not Teach as Part of Their Primary Responsibility and the Professional Staff Who Teach as Part of Their Primary Responsibility sections should be removed from this Policy/Procedure and incorporated into an HR policy. S Gaulden will make revisions and bring forth a new Suggested Edits draft to the November Provost’s Council meeting, which should then be ready to be voted on.
• **Policy/Procedure 300-E Repeat Course**

**Issues:** The Provost’s Council has been discussing the Repeat Course policy/procedure since its October 24, 2019 meeting but has not yet reached consensus as to necessary edits on all components under review. A third draft, which incorporates all of the previously suggested edits, was shared and discussed.

**Meeting Notes:** The current draft of the edited Policy/Procedure is a near-final version that allows students to use the repeat course option for a total of four courses (i.e., up from two courses in the current Policy/Procedure). F Papalia asked if the distinction between retaking a course and repeating a course can be made more clear in the Policy/Procedure. S Gaulden said she will attempt to do so and bring the final proposed revisions to the November Provost’s Council meeting for a vote.

One additional point was made at the meeting, which is that an automated method to track/monitor the R grades should be created and implemented so that students cannot petition and be allowed to use the R grade more than four times. S Gaulden, F Papalia, and R Doster will work on implementing this automated process, which will replace the current manual process.

• **Policy/Procedure 300-KK Integrity of Degree Programs**

**Issues:** Clarification is needed on the meanings of “concentration” and “track” and more, as well on the maximum number of credits required for a major plus the school core. Deans Hangen, Campbell, and Saiff drafted a revised policy/procedure, which was shared with all Council members.

**Meeting Notes:** Further discussion on the meanings of “concentration” and “track” occurred. Since majors require at least 40 credits (i.e., 10 courses), it seems reasonable that a minimum number of shared core courses should be specified for a major that offers concentrations. In this case, the major serves as an “umbrella” for its concentrations. If this is not the case and a minimum number of shared core courses is not possible, then the “concentrations” should likely be offered as independent majors instead. A special exception may need to be made for the three contract majors at the College, or should contract majors not offer concentrations? Additionally, applying the 50% rule to concentrations was suggested.

The value of concentrations was pointed out for job searches, marketing, and recruitment. P Campbell, S Hangen, G Khaneja, F Papalia & E Saiff will conduct an analysis of Ramapo’s current majors with concentrations, which they will share at the November Provost’s Council meeting.
• **Policy/Procedure 300-R Credit Hours**

**Issues:** A request was made at the January 23, 2020 meeting of the Provost’s Council to create a new policy/procedure that spells out the exact expectations related to virtual contact time (e.g., when the College closes for inclement weather, when faculty schedule virtual meetings with their students in lieu of administering a final exam in week 15 of the semester). Instead of creating a new policy, it was subsequently proposed that this information be incorporated into a revised Credit Hours Policy/Procedure or Online Courses Policy and Online Course Manual. A previously-shared survey of other colleges’ policies prepared by D Couzens was discussed, and a small subcommittee led by E Rainforth was established to revise the Online Courses Policy and Online Course Manual.

**Meeting Notes:** E Rainforth and N Varma presented a summary of the work accomplished so far, which merged Credit Hours Policy/Procedure content with Online Courses Policy content. They are recommending different ways in which faculty can “make up” in-person time when transition to short-term or long-term virtual delivery is necessary. It is important to ensure that the minimum required minutes of weekly class meeting time or asynchronous work is occurring or assigned, and that faculty and students understand this USDOE requirement. E Saiff noted that he receives complaints from students that too much work is being assigned, and S Gaulden confirmed this was a popular complaint among those who responded to the Fall 2020 Student Status Check survey.

The subcommittee will continue their work and share updates at the November Provost’s Council meeting.

• **Policy/Procedure 300-T Online Courses**

**Issues:** Given the pandemic-caused remote delivery of many courses, it is important to review this Policy/Procedure and perhaps expand it to include “virtual courses.” This policy references the Online Course Manual rather than a Procedure, which should be updated as well. A small subcommittee led by E Rainforth was formed to update this Policy and Manual. The option of “hyflex” delivery (i.e., when faculty simultaneously teach from campus in-person and remote student participants, for example, through the use of a WebEx Room Kit) and guidelines for video recording classes, which has FERPA implications, should be included in the revised Policy and/or Manual.

Another small subcommittee led by A LePore is working on writing student expectations – a sort of “code of conduct” for virtual and online classes – which will need to be incorporated into or at least referred to in the revised Online Courses Policy and/or
Online Course Manual. The student expectations/code of conduct should also be shared via virtual/online course syllabi.

**Meeting Notes:** A LePore noted that everything is dependent on accurate, consistently-used definitions that describe course delivery modes that are not traditional in-person methods. Discussion ensued about video recording practices (e.g., whether the default should be students’ approval and, otherwise, students would have to opt out) and other expectations of students participating in virtual classes (e.g., cannot drive while joining a WebEx, should not be at work while joining a virtual class). N Choudhury expressed that she would like more consultation with other Units and clear expectations outlined for students who are remotely taking courses. S Gaulden said she will share the MOA on Intellectual Property, which was signed this past summer, with A LePore.

Please note the following points made during the discussion:

- If video recording of class sessions is allowed, then sharing the recordings would be helpful for students who need to review course content presented during classes.
- When faculty choose to video record the session, they should communicate this to their students both verbally and in writing via the syllabus. Students who do not want their likenesses recorded should turn off their webcams.
- Recordings should be shared only with students enrolled in the course and should be no longer accessible after the end of the course. Any recordings that include students’ images should be carefully handled. At present, the College’s default mode of WebEx recordings permits only shared screen content and audio to be recorded.
- Faculty who have OSS-affiliated students who are allowed *video* recordings as per their accommodations should change the default mode to record the active speaker. No student, OSS-affiliated or otherwise, is permitted to record sessions or to share or post recordings made available to them to protect students’ privacy rights.