Provost’s Council Minutes  
September 24, 2020


Approval of Minutes:

The minutes from the June 25, 2020 Provost’s Council meeting were approved.

Report from the Provost:

The Provost provided a quick update on the status of the policies that were approved by Provost’s Council this past summer. She noted that six of the seven revised policies, which now accommodate the needs of Ramapo’s NJ Come Home initiative and our 3+1 partnership with Passaic County Community College, have been posted online. The only policy considered in June that was not finalized was Policy 300-P Graduation with Distinction for Baccalaureate Degree Recipients. This academic year, the Provost’s Council will need to revisit at the very least this policy, as well as to continue discussions related three other policies that were “in review” last year.

Everyone present introduced themselves, and a warm welcome was extended to our student rep, Ms Shreeti Shrestha.

Policies/Procedures to be Reviewed and Discussed:

- Policy/Procedure 300-E Repeat Course

  Issue: The Provost’s Council must continue discussion that occurred at several AY 2019-2020 Provost Council meetings until consensus is reached on how Ramapo’s “grade forgiveness” procedure should be amended, if at all. [Note: A favorable vote to modify the method to calculate a student’s major GPA contained in this procedure (i.e., to use the best grade earned in each required course) occurred at the January 23, 2020 Provost’s Council meeting.]
Meeting Notes: A copy of the suggested revisions to the Repeat Course Policy was reviewed, and previous discussion points related to the policy were summarized. The following points were made in subsequent discussion:

 ✓ F Papalia noted that we will have to change the codes/symbols used in Banner from RF to RC for “repeat course” or others.
 ✓ E Petkus recommended that, in the proposed revisions document, we move the third step in the Repeat Course Procedure, which allows students to repeat a course more than once only with the Dean’s permission, up to the first step.
 ✓ E Saiff said we must ensure consistency across schools.
 ✓ J Connell asked why RFs could not typically be used when repeating Topics courses, and the Deans and E Rainforth responded that content of Topics courses vary so much that the courses are, in fact, different courses. In addition, the course levels could be different.
 ✓ Provost’s Council members were requested to discuss this in their Schools and Convening Groups, and S Rice will also bring these suggested revisions to ARC. It is anticipated that the revisions to the policy will be voted on at the next Council meeting.

• Policy/Procedure 300-KK Integrity of Degree Programs

Issue: The Provost’s Council must continue discussion that occurred at the last Council meeting until consensus is reached on the definition/precise meaning of the terms “concentration” and “track.” In addition, other components of this policy/procedure that must still be reviewed and decided upon are as follows: 1) should a minimum number of shared major courses be established for a track or for a concentration; 2) should students be allowed to complete more than one concentration in a major; 3) are the current 50% and double-counting rules for majors + minors and majors + second majors adequate, and is such a rule needed for concentrations + second concentrations; and 4) is the current 68 credit maximum major + school core recommendation appropriate?

Meeting Notes: Comparative research across peer institutions related to how others define and use “tracks” and “concentrations” was conducted by Deans Campbell, Hangen, and Saiff. They found no consistent use of these terms at other colleges and universities. P Campbell had forwarded their report to S Gaulden in May, which was overlooked, unfortunately. This report will be shared with all Council members to further the discussion. Brief discussion, which made the following points, occurred:

 ✓ P Campbell noted that we should follow the 50% rule for a “concentration,” to provide some structure. At present, some concentrations share several courses with their major while others only share two or so.
F Papalia revealed that, despite what is written in our Integrity of Degree Programs Policy, both “concentration” and “track” presently appear on the transcript. She added that some students have both concentrations and tracks on their transcripts.

Most seemed to agree that a combined major + school core cap of 68 credits seemed reasonable since that would leave 20 unrestricted/unspecified credits, which leaves enough room to complete most minors (i.e., 128 credits total – 68 credits for major and school core – 40 credits in the general education program = 20 credits).

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

  **Issue:** Human Resources requested changes/updates to this policy/procedure to include required approval from the Assistant Vice President of Human Resources and language clarifying the need for a Flexible Work Agreement.

  **Meeting Notes:** When last discussed at Provost’s Council in Spring 2020, there were still issues with language in the Managers and Staff Who Do Not Teach as Part of Their Primary Responsibility section of the policy. S Gaulden suggested we separate out this content and ask the Policies Committee to create a new (non-Academic) policy or add it to an existing HR policy/procedure/regulation. We should restrict this Academic policy (300-HH Teaching Overload) to cover faculty and, possibly, professional staff who teach as part of their primary responsibility if they can, indeed, teach “overload” (e.g., be assigned to teach additional courses beyond what is included in their job descriptions – is that called “overload” in the AFT Master Contract?). Several Council members felt that there is a need to further discuss the assignment of managers and staff to teach daytime courses, especially since it has been alleged that doing so creates an ethics violation. S Gaulden will prepare a revised, slimmed-down version of this policy for consideration at the next Provost’s Council meeting.

- **Policy/Procedure 300-R Credit Hours**

  **Issue:** There is no policy that contains language which would spell out the exact expectations related to virtual contact time when, for example, the College closes for inclement weather or when faculty schedule virtual meetings with their students in lieu of administering a final exam in week 15 of the semester.

  **Meeting Notes:** Research conducted by D Couzens on policies/procedures that establish expectations related to virtual contact time to ensure that adequate class time is scheduled to comply with the State and USDOE definition of a credit hour was shared and reviewed. It is notable that some institutions differentiated between and developed unique policies for short-term and long-term periods of virtual teaching and learning. E Saiff opined that Centenary “went over the top” and suggested we take a look and pull some out. This research will be further
discussed at the next Provost’s Council meeting once everyone has had a chance to peruse it, and a small group that includes N Varma, E Rainforth, and D Couzens was formed to draft a Ramapo policy.

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

  **Issue:** As presently outlined in the policy/procedure, only students who have completed 64 credits (not including P grades) at Ramapo College are eligible for Latin Honors. This means that students who transfer in to the College via the NJ Come Home, RN-to-BSN, and 3+1 agreements may/will not be able to graduate with distinction.

  **Meeting Notes:** J Connell reported that policies related to graduating with honors/distinction are all over the place among peer institutions. Some colleges/universities require a minimum of 38 credits total to be completed at their institution to calculate GPAs, which would qualify students to graduate with Latin honors. While Stockton requires 64 credits minimum (i.e., same as us), Rutgers specifies departmental courses in which the grades earned are used to calculate GPAs. Concerns expressed during discussion included the following:

  ✓ D Nast shared that he has transitioned to a more liberal perspective now, acknowledging that all students who graduate from Ramapo are “Ramapo students.” He also informed us that TCNJ only requires 16 credits to be completed there to be eligible for graduating with honors.

  ✓ D Couzens shared links to a few COPLAC and other NJ institutions, which require *less than half the total number of credits* to be eligible for honors/distinction.

  ✓ E Saiff revisited a former suggestion that we award Latin honors to students who complete at least 64 credits at Ramapo and other honors distinctions to students who complete less than 64 credits at Ramapo.

  ✓ N Choudhury does not want us to set up a two-tiered system. P Campbell and R Doster strongly agreed.

  ✓ J Gronbeck-Tedesco expressed his disinterest in two tracks but, on the other hand, shared concerns that allowing students who transfer in with a lot of credits to be eligible for Latin honors might disenfranchise native Ramapo students.

  ✓ T Laprey suggested we based the minimum number of credits for Latin honors eligibility on the number of credits required at Ramapo for the degree (e.g., DCP = 48; 3+1s = 32).

  ✓ Many supported a policy similar to what Rutgers has, and S Gaulden offered to draft one. *(D Couzens expressed we may have to revise again Policy 300-F Undergraduate Residency Requirement because it includes a reference to Latin Honors.)*
New Policies/Procedures to be Revisited or Reconsidered:

- **Policy/Procedure 300-00 Grading System**

  **Issue:** Students are required to complete some 0-credit courses (e.g., Pathways modules, THEA 021 Running Crew I, THEA 022 Running Crew II) as a requirement to graduate. This past year, 8% of our students did not pass/received F grades for Pathways modules.

  **Meeting Notes:** J Connell suggested that we amend the Grading System Policy to allow students who do not successfully complete the Pathways modules to receive Y grades rather than F grades, which do not affect the GPAs but do appear on the academic transcripts. All present at the meeting agreed to this modification, so it will be voted on at the next Provost Council meeting after the policy’s in-review status can be shared campus wide. The suggested policy revisions will also be shared with ARC as an information item.

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

  **Issue:** 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.

  **Meeting Notes:** S Gaulden shared that a number of issues have emerged since remote teaching and learning began in mid-March 2020. These include using terms consistently across campus to define unique course delivery modes (e.g., “virtual” versus “online”), protocol for recording class meetings on WebEx that protects privacy and intellectual property, and expected student behaviors while participating in remote classes.

  Two groups were formed to work on the following: 1) Group 1 (Ann LePore, R Doster, E Rainforth, F Papalia, S Hangen, D Nast) will review and offer suggestions on revisions to existing Online Courses Policy and Manual; and 2) Group 2 (E Rainforth, S Shrestha, R Doster, T Laprey) will draft a list of student expectations/guidelines for participating in a virtual course.

New Policies/Procedures to be Developed:

- R Doster asked the Provost’s Council to consider developing a Minimum Technology Policy. S Gaulden said that this issue has been raised in Cabinet discussions, as well as with the SGA President. One proactive measure the College is taking to ensure students have at least the minimum-required technology is establishing a Laptop Upcycle site on the Ramapo campus, which we hope to do by Fall 2021.