

CAP's Final Recommendation Undergraduate Academic Standing & Dismissal

TO: Steering Committee
FROM: Committee on Academic Programs
RE: Final Recommendation on Academic Standing & Dismissal
DATE: April 23, 2014

Background

The Steering Committee sent CAP a memo from Professor David Blake, chair of the English Department, raising questions about the college's current academic dismissal policy.

Charge

The Steering Committee requested that CAP review, Professor Blake's memo and decide whether the current dismissal policy (available at <http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/dismissal.html>) needs to be modified. Should it be decided that the policy should be changed, CAP may want to consider how students' previous academic records have been handled in the conditional readmission policy (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/conditionalreadmission.html>) and if this is relevant to the situation described by Professor Blake. If CAP recommends changes in the dismissal policy, it is asked to make a recommendation to make certain that a student is being monitored to insure realistic progress toward meeting all graduation requirements.

Testimony

Throughout the development of the following policy recommendation, CAP worked closely with staff from Records and Registration. CAP also sought input from Professor Blake as well as from the Academic Dismissal Appeals Committee. As per the charge, CAP ensured that the policy recommendation addressed monitoring of students. Fundamental to the development of this recommendation was providing eligible students with time (referred to as a 2 semester grace period) to raise their cumulative GPA as lack of time to do so was a short coming of the current policy.

CAP sought testimony from the campus community on its initial preliminary recommendation from Staff Senate, Student Government and faculty. On February 19, 2014 CAP held an open forum co-sponsored by Faculty Senate. Emailed testimony was also gathered. Based on the input CAP received, the preliminary recommendation was revised to include language about pre-major status, to raise the grace period GPA from 2.0 (recommended originally) to a sliding scale, and to include more specific language about when the Office of Records and Registration would contact students. Records and Registration objected to the revised preliminary recommendation on the basis that 1) a sliding scale would be difficult to monitor and 2) some students would be given an automatic grace period—Records and Registration felt strongly that all students should be required to appeal a dismissal. As the second objection stated by Records and Registration reflected a view quite different from the input received from other campus constituents and from

the original reason which prompted Dr. Blake to request a review of the policy, additional testimony from Student Government, Staff Senate and faculty on the section about academic dismissal was requested.

Specifically, CAP solicited testimony on the merits of dismissal options A, B and C:

A) **all** students who are subject to academic dismissal (those students who have been placed on Academic Probation for any two consecutive semesters or three total semesters in their academic career at the College) should be *automatically dismissed* but be given an opportunity to appeal that decision

Or, as presented in the revised preliminary recommendation that

B) **some** students (those whose most recent semester GPA was 3.0 or higher or those who have been accepted into a new major or pre-major—points #1a and 1b in the policy below) be *given an automatic grace period* and not be dismissed from the College

Or,

C) students in point #1a below be granted an automatic grace period while those students in point #1b below be dismissed but be given an opportunity to appeal that decision

Testimony gathered from students was in favor of option B. On April 16th CAP and Faculty Senate co-hosted a second open forum. Emailed testimony was also solicited. Faculty input was split between options B and C. Records and Registration lobbied the Academic Dismissal Committee members to support their position that all students must file an appeal and that no automatic dismissals be given (option A). Despite the testimony to be sensitive to students who had shown either academic growth through a strong recent semester GPA or to students who realized that a change in career/academic path would be in their own best interest, the inability of the College's record management system to track students swayed CAP to revise the policy recommendation to state that all students subject to dismissal must file an appeal should they want to remain at the College. CAP notes that its final recommendation does not fully address Dr. Blake's concern that the College dismissal policy be sensitive to students who have, in fact, shown academic progress.

Final Recommendation

The College of New Jersey is committed to supporting students on their educational path toward graduation. The following policies and procedures are dedicated to ensuring that our students are aware of their academic status, acknowledge any present academic difficulties and receive the support they need to resolve these difficulties. If, despite appropriate intervention on the part of the College, a student fails to achieve academic success, it is prudent for the College to assist the student to make alternative academic plans in a reasonable period of time.

A student's academic standing at the College is determined by his or her grade point average. The grade point average is based only on courses taken at the College and is calculated by

dividing the student's total grade points (the product of the number of course units attempted and the weight of the grade earned in each course) by the number of course units a student attempted in letter-graded courses at the 100 level or above. This excludes credits transferred from other institutions and classes graded with W, P, U,CR, or NCR.

TCNJ Retention Standards

Number Course Units Attempted at TCNJ	Cumulative Grade Point Average	Academic Standing
More than zero	2.0 or Higher	Good
Up to – 8 Course Units	1.75 to below 2.0	Intervention
Up to – 8 Course Units	Below 1.75	Probation
Above 8 Course Units	Below 2.0	Probation

Good Academic Standing

A student is in good academic standing if he or she achieves the minimum cumulative grade point average noted above for the total of his or her attempted units.

Academic Intervention Standing

All entering undergraduate (freshmen and transfer) students, who have attempted 8 course units or less at The College of New Jersey will be placed on Academic Intervention if their grade point average falls below 2.0 but is 1.75 or higher. After grades are posted and GPA calculations are made, The Office of Records and Registration will send these students an Academic Intervention letter, copied to their academic advisor(s) and the appropriate College academic support personnel and offices, which may include the EOF office, Athletic department, Center for Student Success, Counseling and Psychological Services, or others. The academic advisor will assist the student in developing an Academic Improvement Action Plan, which will include regular meetings with the academic advisor and may recommend referrals to other support services.

Academic Probation Standing

A student will be placed on Academic Probation by the College if the student:

1. has attempted *zero to eight course units in letter-graded courses* and has earned a cumulative GPA of less than 1.75, OR
2. has attempted *more than eight course units in letter-graded courses*, and has earned a cumulative GPA of less than 2.0.

The student will be sent an Academic Probation letter, copied to his/her academic advisor(s) and the appropriate College academic support personnel and offices, which may include the EOF office, Athletic department, Center for Student Success, or others. The student:

1. must work with his or her academic advisor to develop an Academic Improvement Action Plan.
2. will be allowed to take a maximum of 3 course units in the following semester and will be instructed to adjust his or her schedule accordingly. A student who fails to do so will have his/her schedule adjusted by the Office of Records and Registration in consultation with the academic advisor or chair. The student must solicit the approval of the chair of his or her academic major department to reinstate any course that has been dropped. A course will be reinstated only if there is a compelling reason to do so.

Academic Dismissal

If a student is placed on Academic Probation for any two consecutive semesters (or three total semesters in his/her academic career at the College) he or she is subject to dismissal from the College. The Office of Records and Registration sends dismissal letters to affected students after the posting of all grades. A student who receives an Academic Dismissal letter will be provided the opportunity to appeal this decision. Instructions for appealing a dismissal are included in the letter sent by Records and Registration.

The following situations inform an academic dismissal and appeal of a dismissal.

1. If a student who is dismissed appeals the dismissal and is reinstated by the College dismissal committee, the student *may* be granted a two semester grace period at the discretion of the committee to raise his/her cumulative GPA to a 2.0 or higher. Situations in which the dismissal committee may consider granting a grace period include:
 - a. In the most recent semester the student completed at least 3 courses and the student's semester GPA is 3.0 or higher.
 - b. The student has been accepted into a new major or pre-major and in the most recent semester the student completed at least 3 courses and the student's semester GPA is 2.0 or higher.
 - c. Circumstances exist in which the dismissal appeal committee feels a grace period will increase the student's likelihood of successful completion of a major.
2. A student who is granted a grace period will not be subject to dismissal during the grace period (2 semesters) as long as each grace period semester GPA is 2.5 or higher. Students who do not meet this standard each semester of the grace period will be dismissed. A student qualifying for the grace period will be notified of his/her standing by the Office of Records and Registration. Students should note that depending on the cumulative GPA at the time of dismissal, a semester GPA higher than 2.5 may be needed to raise the cumulative GPA to 2.0.

3. If after the two semester grace period, a student's cumulative GPA does not place him/her in good academic standing (2.0 or higher), he/she will be dismissed from the College and must follow the procedures outlined in this policy in order to be considered for reinstatement to the College.
4. Although taking an intersession course may be part of the academic improvement plan, a student will not be reinstated automatically or solely by taking intersession course. He/she must still complete the appeal process.

Appeals

The academic dismissal appeals process will be coordinated by the Office of Records and Registration. That office will convene the Academic Dismissal Appeals Committee to review all appeal requests. To most effectively consider information about the wide range of factors that may impact a student's ability to be successful at the College, membership of the committee should include the Assistant Dean(s) of the respective schools, the Dean of Students, the Director of the Educational Opportunity Fund, and a staff representative from the Office of Records and Registration. The Academic Dismissal Appeals Committee will meet at the end of each semester to review all dismissal appeals from students and will be responsible for conveying all decisions to the Office of Records and Registration. The Office of Records and Registration will respond to students in writing (email and U.S. Postal Services) within one business day of that decision.

A student's appeal application and all supporting documents must be submitted by the deadline date prescribed in the Academic Dismissal letter. As appropriate, a student's appeal application should reference the situations outlined above.

A student who has been academically dismissed from The College of New Jersey and either did not appeal the dismissal or had the appeal denied, may not be readmitted to the College until a minimum of two semesters (not including intersessions) have elapsed and must make a formal application through the Office of Admissions.

A student who is reinstated through the dismissal appeal process or who is readmitted to the College after two semesters or more may be granted a two semester grace period to raise his/her cumulative GPA to 2.0 or higher. A readmitted student will not be subject to dismissal during this grace period (2 semesters) as long as each grace period semester GPA is 2.5 or higher.

If after a two semester grace period, the cumulative GPA does not place the student in good academic standing (2.0 or higher), the student will be dismissed from the College. Students subject to dismissal may only change majors one time; students may not cycle through new majors in order to avoid an academic dismissal.

A student's complete appeal will include the following:

1. Appeal Application Form
2. Documentation of Circumstances
3. Descriptive Analysis

4. Descriptive Plan of Action
5. Academic Plan of Action Form
6. Department Chair Recommendation Form
7. Faculty Support Letters
8. TCNJ transcript to be provided by the Office of Records and Registration