

**SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
YEAR-END REPORT – 2005 – 2006**

Submitted the SLA Faculty Assembly on April 20, 2006  
Submitted by Mary Sauer, Chair

**Members**

Rick Bein, Geography  
Josh Farrington, Student  
Giles Hoyt, World Languages and Culture  
Jack McKivigan, History  
Mary Sauer (Chair), English  
Gail Whitchurch, Communication Studies  
Michael Snodgrass, Agenda Council Representative, non-voting  
Rick Ward, SLA, non-voting  
Jim Miller, SLA, non-voting

**Meetings**

September 29, 2005  
January 12, 2006  
April 13, 2006  
All meetings on Thursdays from 8:00am to 9:15am

**Responsibilities of Committee Members**

1. Review petitions before meeting time;
2. Attend all meetings;
3. Discuss and vote on petitions during meetings;
4. Determine concerns of faculty, students, and the Committee;
5. Develop talking points and/or proposals for solutions to concerns to be sent to the SLA Faculty Assembly;
6. Be available for immediate e-mail consultations on urgent petitions;
7. Serve on the academic misconduct appeal board when requested.

**Responsibilities of Chair**

1. Keep in close touch with the SLA Dean of Students;
2. Call for and direct committee meetings;
3. Facilitate discussion and decision making at meetings;
4. Communicate with committee members when necessary;
5. Review and sign letters to students concerning results of their petitions (letters are prepared by the SLA Dean of Students Office);
6. Arrange for academic misconduct appeal board when requested;
7. Write thank you notes to members of the committee at end of the year;
8. Write the end of the year report for the Faculty Assembly.

## Petitions

In 2005 – 2006 the SLA Academic Affairs Committee reviewed thirty student petitions. The results are noted in the table below.

Type of Petition	YES	NO	TOTAL
Student initiated grade change	6	21	27
Modification of graduations requirements	2	1	3

All decisions, except one, were made with the full committee approval. One committee member objected to a particular denial of a grade change. His concern was noted.

Of the grade change petitions, 24 requested a change from “F” to “W”, of which 6 were granted. Three students requested a change of actual grade (“A” to “W”, “D” to “B”, “D” to “C”); all were denied.

Two of the three modification petitions concerned the Junior/Senior Integrator course; both were approved. The final modification petition request concerned electives. That petition was partially accepted.

## Topics of Concern

### *Frequent Decisions*

Because student explanations in petitions often fall into specific categories, the Committee feels having a written record of the types of student problems that it normally accepts for a grade change from “F” to “W” would be helpful. While each petition needs to be considered on its own merits, consistency would better protect students and faculty, informing each on the potential of success of the petitions.

Along this same line, the Committee suggests students be given more complete directions on filling out the petition, on supplying adequate supporting material, and on adhering to the five year rule for consideration.

Dean Ward and Mary Sauer will consider both of these issues during the summer.

### *Instructor/Department Response*

All Student Initiated Grade Change Petitions are sent to the department offering the class for a response from the instructor or the department. If no response is forthcoming within a month, the petition is resubmitted to the department. If after a second month, the department does not reply, the petition is sent to the Academic Affairs Committee for a decision. While the Committee has seen an increase of returned decisions from departments, it continues to be concerned at the numbers never decided. If the instructor or department approves the petition, then the request is granted. If the instructor or department denies the petition, then the petition and the reason for denial is returned to the Dean of Students’ office and forwarded to the Committee for a final decision. This information from the department is vital in making a fair decision. When no information is sent, the committee must make its decision with only one side of the story.

The Committee asks that department chairs take a more active role in facilitating a response to the petitions, including offering advice when an instructor cannot be contacted. The Committee also asks that faculty remember to keep their students' grades for a full five years.

#### *Junior/Senior Integrator*

When students have not been able to take one of the courses designated as a junior/senior integrator course, they come to the Committee for permission to accept a different course that they feel meets the spirit of the integrator. In the past, the Committee has had little evidence on which to make a decision. Thus the Dean of Students and the Committee will from this point on ask students to write an essay that argues for the acceptance of the course they are petitioning. This essay will then be evaluated by the Committee and a decision made. The Dean of Students' office will prepare a letter of explanation for students wanting to make such an argument. The Committee also urges the Campus to look carefully at the junior/senior integrator course requirement, making changes that would allow students more choices of approved courses.

#### *Academic Misconduct Appeal Board*

If the SLA Faculty Assembly passes the proposal for the Academic Misconduct Appeal Board, the SLA Academic Affairs Committee is prepared to serve as that board. This would involve the Dean of Students and the Chair of the Committee convening an appropriate board as judged by the proposal. The majority of this board would come from the Committee; however, other faculty and students may need to be added. The decisions made by the appeal board would then be governed by the approved procedure of SLA.

#### *Core Pre-Requisites*

While not in the prevue of this Committee, we strongly urge the Assembly to consider a policy allowing departments to place on the university computer system a pre-requisite lock that would not allow students to take upper level courses until the student has successfully completed particular introductory courses. Writing courses such as W131 and W132 or W231 as well as introductory courses from particular departments were suggested as courses that should be required. The Committee comes to this recommendation after hearing from many students who somehow got into upper level classes without the preparation for the writing, thinking, researching and thus failed or stopped attending such courses.

#### **Thank you**

Finally the Committee offers great thanks to Rick Ward and Jim Miller whose guidance and organization has helped the committee function effectively.

As chair, I also send my thanks to all member of the Committee for their tireless work to serve our students and faculty.