



MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty Senate Executive Committee

FROM: Elizabeth S. Chilton, Provost and Executive Vice President

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth S. Chilton".

SUBJECT: Academic Policy 38b

DATE: November 18, 2021

We are writing to propose that the WSU Faculty Senate place a hold Academic Policy 38b during Academic Year 2021-2022. This regulation states that “First-time, first-year undergraduate students are recessed from the University after their first term of enrollment if their semester grade point average is below 1.0. Individuals are recessed from the university for one full semester (Fall or Spring).” Instead of automatically recessing students who fall below a 1.0 first semester GPA, a team of individuals from academic and student affairs will establish a high-touch mechanism to help retain these first-year students through mechanisms designed to assist students to move past the barriers that impeded their academic progress. While not comprehensive, elements of this recovery plan could include:

- A hold would be placed on the Spring semester enrollment of first-time, first-year students who fall under a 1.0 GPA.
- This hold would be removed by ASCC when students complete a required, holistic reinstatement meeting that includes representatives from academic advising, financial aid, and student affairs so that challenges and barriers and their effective solutions can be identified and implemented for the next semester

Rationale: During the first two and a half semesters of the COVID-19 pandemic, WSU added several academic support mechanisms to help protect students who were vulnerable to becoming academically deficient or dropping out from the university due to low grades. These elements were temporary in nature and were designed to address the complexities students faced during semesters of remote instruction at WSU. Those options included:

- Extending P/F grade deadlines in Spring 2020 and adding the PP grade option
- Adding the new No Record-Covid (NRC) grade option for the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters

With the return to face-to-face instruction during Fall 2021, we lifted these grading options. We recognize that there is an opportunity to be innovative and use the lessons learned during the past two years about student needs and their impacts on academic performance. The 2020-2021 academic year taught us about the intersection of academics with challenges in student life including family dynamics, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and mental health challenges. Recognizing these challenges requires us to reimagine how WSU supports student success through the development and implementation of innovative safety nets designed to help retain academically at-risk students so that they can chart a new path

to graduation. Academic Regulation 38b is a significant barrier that will impede these efforts. The outcome of this pre-pandemic policy is that it:

- automatically locks at-risk students out of WSU after their first semester
- cuts off access to critical academic and student support programs at times when they are needed most
- impedes our collaborative efforts to improve the retention of students from first enrollment to graduation
- leads to students becoming adrift after one semester with the accompanying economic burden of potentially not earning a university degree

Outcome: It is anticipated that this experimental approach will allow WSU to better retain students in the future through a holistic student success program that bridges both academics and student support efforts. We would like to consider this alternative to AR 38b as a pilot program and reassess by the end of the academic year whether this should be a permanent change to the policy.

This proposal has been discussed with the Registrar and ASCC and there is an implementation plan for processing the new hold placed on students who fall under the 1.0 GPA threshold during their first semester. Student Financial Services and Student Affairs are fully supportive, and they see this as an equity imperative to mitigate COVID impacts. Academic leadership at other campuses is also supportive. Thank you for your consideration of this proposal to mitigate some of the inequitable impacts of the pandemic and for the opportunity to envision and pilot new student success policies and procedures at WSU.

Cc: William Davis, Interim Vice Provost for Academic Engagement and
Student Achievement
Laura Hill, Senior Vice Provost
Vice Chancellors for Academic Affairs