

**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
FINAL REPORT: AY2012-2013**

**Committee members:** Jim Baumann, Arthur Jago, Ilhyung Lee, Judith Mabary, Nicole Monnier (chair), Don Sievert, Katherine Reed

***In AY2012-13, the Faculty Council Academic Affairs Committee addressed the following issues:***

**1. Academic calendars.**

- The 2014-2015 calendar was approved (10/25/12; <http://facultycouncil.missouri.edu/minutes/12-13/meeting-minutes10-25-12.html>)
- The 2015-16 calendar has been proposed (6/6/13) and is awaiting approval. (Note: Usually the academic calendar is proposed in the early fall semester. However, given the issues surrounding the approval of the 2014-15 calendar, it seems expedient to begin the calendar process in the spring semester than wait until the beginning of the fall semester.)

**2. Faculty Handbook.** The only significant change to the MU Faculty Handbook was the alignment of academic deadlines with those of cashier refund deadlines, a proposal that originated with the Registrar's Office, was supported by the various advising units, deans, etc., and put to motion by Academic Affairs. This included aligning the last day to withdraw from a single course and the last day to withdraw from the university, which will now be six days before the final day of classes for the semester. Approved 10/11/13; <http://facultycouncil.missouri.edu/minutes/12-13/meeting-minutes10-11-12.html>; see appendix 1 for full proposal.

Otherwise, all other changes to the handbook were mechanical edits or belated updates of previously approved changes to the handbook (e.g., changes to the policy for incomplete grades).

**3. Plus/minus grading system.** Together with Student Affairs, Academic Affairs continued to meet this fall with MSA officers interested in moving to a different grading system. After several meetings with MSA and other groups (e.g., the A&S curriculum committee), both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs felt that without greater input from the students (specifically, data that showed students were dissatisfied with and/or being harmed by the current grading system), the issue was not worth pursuing further at this time.

**4. University winter closure issues.** In conjunction with the campus closures for snow in February, Academic Affairs proposed the following two motions regarding the AY12-13 calendar, both of which were passed by Faculty Council:

- That UMC count Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup> towards the number of required course meeting days for the spring 2013 semester (approved 2/28/13; <http://facultycouncil.missouri.edu/minutes/12-13/meeting-minutes02-28-13.html>)
- That Reading Day be made available for a make-up of one of the missed T/Th classes (approved 3/14/13: <http://facultycouncil.missouri.edu/minutes/12-13/meeting-minutes03-14-13.html>)

**5. Revised course evaluation forms.** Academic Affairs reviewed the revised teaching evaluation forms created by ARC. The committee made a motion to accept the new forms as a replacement for the existing MU standardized evaluation forms, on the condition that they reinstate a question from the older forms often used (albeit incorrectly) in P&T and annual evaluation processes. Approved 6/6/13; see appendix 2 for full language of motion, which includes a strong recommendation for a campus-wide discussion of the (mis)use of these forms in the P&T process.

***Potential issues for 2013-14:***

1. Survey of faculty use of last week of classes / exam period. With the large increase in student numbers at MU over the past decade, the Registrar's Office and other academic and advising units (e.g., A&S) have reported serious problems with final exam scheduling, problems that have been exacerbated by an increase in evening exams as well as a general shortening of the final exam period in the past six years. Additionally, there is strong anecdotal evidence that a significant number of instructors are using the final week of classes for "final tests," while others are using the final exam period for other purposes, such as group final projects, etc. Academic Affairs would like to gain a more coherent picture of faculty use of the final two weeks of the semester (final week of classes + finals week) to see whether there might be more efficient ways to use the period in question.

2. Faculty Handbook updates/revisions. Brenda Selman regularly submits a list of possible policy issues, changes and updates after her annual summer "rereading" of the Faculty Handbook.

3. Use of teaching evaluations at MU. In approving the revised standard MU teaching evaluation forms, the committee strongly recommended a campus-level discussion of the current uses (and abuses) of teaching evaluations. While the role of such evaluations in P&T processes is an issue more appropriate for Faculty Affairs, it is also important to understand how we are using these standard course forms and other modes of teaching evaluation to improve *teaching* on the MU campus. In response to our feedback on the new forms and the issues surrounding them, Jim Spain (Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education) is proposing a "blue-ribbon panel" of outstanding instructors (e.g., Kemper winners) and campus scholars of teaching to determine how we're evaluating teaching on campus and what we're doing with those evaluations. Academic Affairs will receive updates and a final report from the committee, which is provisionally slated to complete its work over the AY13-14 year.

4. Mizzou Online. With the completion of the efforts of the Online Academic Online Task Force and FC approval of the task force's set of recommendations, Academic Affairs might wish to review initial outcomes and monitor any significant issues that arise. [Note: this was a charge for AY12-13, but as there seemed to be no problems this year, the committee did nothing with the issue. It's worth continuing to monitor, however.]

5. Fall break: In the spring, Academic Affairs was approached by Taylor Major, MSA chair for Academic Affairs, with a request to consider adding a short break (3-day or 4-day weekend) to the fall semester around week 7 or 8. Mr. Major plans to come back to FC Academic Affairs in the fall with a formalized proposal and a better sense of student support for the idea.

–Submitted by Nicole Monnier (chair), June 18, 2013