

New Policy Proposal (Proposed to Faculty Senate on 3-22-16)

Submitted by the University Assembly Recruitment, Admissions, Retention & Student Financial Aid (RARSFA) Committee

Voted on and unanimously approved by RARSFA and supported by Directors of Student Financial Aid, Student Success, Admissions, and the Registrar on 02-02-16.

PROPOSAL 1:

The RARSFA Committee proposes that faculty participation in the Verification of Enrollment (roster verification) process be mandatory*.

*We propose that the “mandatory” nature be interpreted as it is for final grade submissions.

RATIONALE:

Although faculty are strongly encouraged to participate in the Verification of Enrollment (roster verification) process at present, this process is not mandatory, thereby increasing the frequency with which students receive financial aid funding without meeting financial aid requirements that mandate class attendance. This contributes to a common scenario at UMSL of students running out of financial aid before completing their degrees. In addition, not completing the roster verification increases the number of F and FN grades issued which misstates both enrollment and F/W values. Given that students that are potentially not enrolled are left in the census numbers, retention and graduation rates are also negatively impacted.

Several aspects led to this recommendation including the implementation of electronic roster verification through starfish versus the historical method of paper roster distributions that often never made it to some faculty. Electronic verification will also allow the RO and Academic Affairs to be able to track survey responses thereby allowing for accountability and follow up – a process that was not feasible with the paper roster verification method. In addition, the dip in campus retention rates despite the many quality programs and processes put in place to boost retention have led to the need for the campus to be more proactive in making sure actions (or non-actions) are not contributing to the problem by falsely including students that did not attend in the calculation of retention.

A failure to follow this policy necessitates the inclusion of data from students who fail to attend classes in reports to the National Student Clearinghouse and IPEDS, negatively and erroneously impacting the computation of benchmark parameters such as UMSL retention and graduation rates. Adherence to this policy would increase the accuracy of tracking F and FN grades issued. In addition, student loan default rates would likely be reduced as 14% of students currently reported to collections for loan default have had at least one FN grade in a term for which they owe monies, and 26% of the non-responding courses for Fall 2015 resulted in FN grade submissions. Over 12% of the students with FN grades for Fall 2015 were assigned a negative academic standing status, when in reality, the data suggest that many of these students are not even attending classes at UMSL.

If this proposal were to be adopted, business practices would need to be put in place similar to those involved in requiring final grade submissions. Procedures analogous to those used with regard to mandatory grade submissions would need to be followed. These would include but may not be limited to: communicating the requirement to all deans, faculty, and other administrators; employing practices that will increase ease of reporting and compliance (i.e., establishing and disseminating a clear deadline for completion each semester, clearly communicating the steps involved, etc.); trouble-shooting any reporting difficulties; tracking non-compliant sections; and following up with those who do not follow the policy to assist them in accurately and promptly reporting their data going forward.