COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY
Amendments to Regulations on the Withdraw (W) Notation and the Drop

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

A. Withdraw (W) Notation
The Committee on Educational Policy proposes to tighten the policy for student selection of the Withdraw (W) notation. With mandatory grading in fall 2001, CEP has been aware of the need to monitor the use of the withdrawal. Information covering the period since fall 2001 from the Council of Preceptors shows that there is misuse of the W notation by students who withdraw from classes late in the quarter, thereby keeping their GPA at or above 2.0, the minimum required for good academic standing, but who are not making minimum progress toward the degree.

Two approaches considered were enforcement of minimum progress standards and further restriction of the use of the W. UCSC already has minimum progress standards which were used exclusively before the advent of mandatory grading (see SCR 6.2.2). It requires colleges to monitor the number of credits earned on a regular basis. After the fact, students are warned and ultimately censured if they fell below the minimum levels. Currently, only UCB and UCLA enforce minimum progress.

Further restriction of the W was also considered. Other campuses have recognized the widespread misuse of the W notation. UCB recently instituted a strict policy that allows (recorded) “drops” after the 8th week of their 16 week semester for cause only. This has led to a drastic decline in the number of drops requested—from approximately 3,000 to 300 per term. Similarly, UCD allows dropping after the 4th week for cause only. Most of the other campuses allow recorded W’s or drops with some level of approval (though sometimes a mere formality) after 4-6 weeks of the quarter have elapsed.

If the following legislation is approved, CEP will adopt the following policy on withdrawing from a course.
- The period for withdrawing from a course will be shortened from the end of week 9 to the end of week 6. This will still allow students time to receive the results of midterms and assess whether to continue in the course.
- Students can withdraw from a course only after obtaining approval from the college provost or his/her designee. Minimum progress standards will be calculated for all students, not just students who entered prior to fall 2001, and will be used in the determination of requests to withdraw.
- After week 6, students may withdraw from a course only for catastrophic circumstances (documented medical, psychological or family emergency).

The proposed amendments to the withdraw regulation contained in SCR 6.1.4 and SCR 9.1.1, combined with CEP’s policy, above, will make UCSC’s withdraw among the most stringent within the UC system, and one which will address the misuse of the W as well as promote better enrollment management for both students and departments.

6.1.4 Between the last day to drop a class and the beginning of the last week of instruction, a student is permitted to withdraw from and receive the grade of W for any course. The completed petition must be filed at the Office of the Registrar by the date specified in the academic calendar.

6.1.4 Between the last day to drop a class and the beginning of the last week of instruction, a student is permitted to withdraw from any course by the deadline set by the Committee on Educational Policy and subject to its policies, and receive the grade of W for any course. The completed petition must be filed at the Office of the Registrar by the date specified in the academic calendar.
9.1.1 Grades A-F, shall be awarded for undergraduate students in the manner and with the meanings prescribed in SR 780, except that the grades A and B may be modified by plus (+) or minus (-) suffixes and the grade of C may only be modified by a plus (+) suffix. The grade of I shall be awarded as specified in SCR 9.1.6. The grade of IP shall be awarded as an interim mark in multi-term courses described in SCR 9.1.7. The grade of W denotes the formal withdrawal of the student from the course after the last day to drop a course and prior to the beginning of the last week of instruction.

B. Dropping courses

In its review of the regulations for the withdraw notation, it was noted that SCR 6.1.3 had not been revised to reflect the current practice of an add/drop period through the end of the 3rd week. This change will bring the regulations up to date with existing practice.

6.1.3 A student is permitted to drop any course with the consent of the instructor(s) by filing a petition at the Office of the Registrar on any business day not later than the last day of instruction. The petition must bear the signature of the provost of the student's college (or designee) indicating that the college has discussed the action and its consequences with the student. (En 30 Apr 69; Am 26 May 71; EC 1 Aug 77)

Respectfully submitted,

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