

Committee on Academic Policy

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 8th, 2021, 2:00 pm

Meeting #11 AY2021-2022

Meeting held at Fuller Labs Becket Conference Room (FL246)

Attendees: O. Pavlov (Chair; SSPS), B. Calli (Secretary; Robotics), A. C. Heinricher (Provost's Office), S. Zhou (Chemical Engineering), S. Levitan '24 (Student Representative), R. Gyurcsan '24 (Student Representative), S. Miles (Registrar)

1. Meeting minutes for Meeting #10 AY2021-2022 were reviewed and approved with minor revisions. It is decided that the feedback of J. A. McNeill (Dean of Engineering), M. Richman (Aerospace Engineering/Faculty Governance) should also be collected, since they appear in the minutes.
2. CAP continued discussing the need of a new "Pass"/"NR" policy.
 - a. Mental Health and Well-being Task Force had recommended to implement a new "Pass"/"NR" policy to help students manage their stress levels, and CAP discussed it in Meetings #7 and #8 of the AY 2021-2022. In Meeting #7, the student representatives of CAP were asked to collect student feedback about this policy. In Meeting #8, the student representatives told CAP that many students support the policy, but some students were also concerned that an aggressive "Pass"/"NR" policy might degrade the value of their degree.
 - b. In this meeting, the student representatives told CAP that the students continued discussing this policy, and the student opinions about this policy have changed significantly: Many students now do not support a new "Pass"/"NR" policy due to the following reasons.
 - i. They think that a new "Pass" grade might diminish the meaning of "NR".
 - ii. If the number of "Pass" grades is unlimited, it might be abused by the students. If the number is limited, then it might cause additional stress about how to best use the "Pass" grade.
 - iii. An additional "Pass" grade might make students' decisions very complicated. A simpler system is easier to understand and manage by the students.
 - iv. The impact of a "Pass" grade might not be fully understood or anticipated by the students. The decisions given at the time might have unexpected negative impact on the student's career.
 - v. "NR" fits the needs of the vast majority of the students. A good step towards reducing the stress might be to change the culture around "NR" and communicate its purpose and impact better to the students. Senior students also said that they were not fully aware of their past "NR" decisions' impact to their later years.
 - c. CAP agrees that the impact of the "Pass" grade to the later stages of the students' career and school schedule is complicated and might be hard to predict. In various companies and institutions that the students may apply, "Pass" is interpreted as the lowest possible grade.
 - d. CAP notes that the satisfactory academic progress rules to keep financial aid are different than the academic standing rules in the catalog. CAP thinks that it should be clearly communicated to the students how financial aid ties to the NR grades. Financial aid is assessed at the end of the year and the students are expected to have 10 1/3 unit classes in a year.
 - e. CAP is also notified that the majority of the university that implemented a "Pass" policy during pandemic went back to having no such option in this academic year.
 - f. In the light of this information, CAP decided to further discuss the possibility of a new "Pass" policy in the upcoming meetings. CAP will coordinate with the Mental Health and Well-being Task Force.
3. Meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Berk Calli
B-term Secretary