

**Relevant information regarding: Vice Provost's overturning faculty grades.
COF agenda item for 3/10/05**

BACKGROUND

The major issue involves the Vice Provost Office overturning the grades earned by a student in two of seven courses last fall semester (Fall 2004). Specially, this involves a senior student enrolled in 7 courses, including the repetition of a failed course required for the major.

Early last semester the student had an excused medical absence documented for a few days. Faculty met with the student and arranged for assistance with missed material. As the semester progressed, the student had extensive absences in the two relevant courses and was contacted by each faculty member independently of one another to discuss the absences and their concern for student's success in their courses. The student DID NOT, at this or any other time, REQUEST EITHER A MEDICAL WITHDRAWL OR INCOMPLETE FROM THE INSTRUCTORS.

The student completed the semester and all 7 courses receiving an F in one 3 credit course and a C/D in the 4 credit course that was being repeated. In one of the two courses, the student had over 13 documented absences while in the other it is documented that 4 lectures and 2 labs were missed. Attendance was typically recorded only in the labs, however, in this case lecture attendance began mid semester after the faculty noticed the student was missing. The high number of absences is in contrast to two other courses within the department.

As a consequence of the grades in these prerequisite courses, the student was unable to enroll in senior final internship/practicum in spring 2005. An emergency meeting was subsequently convened with the student, mother and program director to plan for a solution. During which time, we agreed to accept substitution courses at another institution to assist the student's graduation plans, thus the student's graduation would be only one semester late. Further, we arranged to schedule a clinical practicum for summer. During this meeting, the mother asked for the F and CD grades to be expunged because it would hurt the student's future chances of getting into professional school. The request was denied by the program director because there is no mechanism for expunging grades and because I grades are not given after the completion of a course.

Attendance records during the fall semester indicate that in four courses taught within the department the student missed an excessive amount of lectures and labs in each of the two courses in which the grades have subsequently been changed. In another course, there were no absences recorded other than 2 early on with documentation from the office of the dean. In the other course the student missed four classes over the entire semester of which two were early in the semester and were also documented. Other courses completed were not within department and no information is available other than that the student passed them.

In late January (1/20/05), the College office received a brief note from a physician indicating that the student had some medical issues during the previous semester that were now resolved. At this time, the parent appealed to office of Disability, Fr. Wild's office and the College claiming the student was not appropriately provided with special accommodations for disabled students. It was explained to the parent that the student was not and is not disabled and that standards for dealing with disabilities, medical and emergency issues include the student seeking accommodations with faculty as needed during the course of the semester. Fr. Wild's office stated that as outlined in the undergraduate bulletin, appeals reside within the Academic unit in which grades are given and that the decision of Dean's office is final. However, the letter also stated that student could file an appeal with Provost, not for review based upon the merits of the dean's decision, but upon whether proper procedures had been followed.

The Dean reviewed the grading procedures in the courses *with the individual faculty* and rendered a decision based upon the following information.

- Parental request was for the grades to be expunged, or for the retroactive application of an I or a medical W.
- During the course, the student did not ask faculty for I or W at any time.
- Grades can not be assigned after the completion of a semester.
- Faculty are not in a position to diagnosis student's health and medical documentation should have been provided by the student if a request had been made for either an incomplete or withdrawal in the course.
- Appropriate documentation of frequent absences in each of the two courses with minimal to none in others in the same semester in which the student claimed incapacitating medical condition did not support a medical condition restricted to these two courses.

In conclusion, the Dean determined the grades in the two courses were given legitimately awarded and the student's appeal was denied.

The parent (Student) appealed to Office of Provost and the case was reviewed by Vice Provost. The Vice Provost apparently spoke with, either, the student and parent. The Dean's office was asked to provide a written summary statement of the case and this was provided. The Provost office DID NOT AT ANY TIME contact either of the faculty involved in these courses. The Vice Provost notified the student that the appeal was accepted and that the grades in two of seven courses from the previous semester would be changed to a W. Further, it was stated that compensation from the University would be provided to help cover tuition expenses incurred at other institution and subsequently, the student has placed a request for financial assistance for this summer. In addition, the Vice Provost's office did not notify either faculty of the grade change but rather notified the Dean that his decision was over turned. According to the memo, the rationale for the decision was stated as, "Given my concern that this student was not offered either option and instead given a F and a C/D, I have asked the Registrar to record a medical withdrawal for the two courses". The Vice Provost indicated that the student told her that her request for an I was denied by faculty.

THIS IS A MAJOR CONCERN REGARDING FACULTY WELFARE, RESPECT, AUTOMONY AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT MARQUETTE.

There are two major issues.

1. FACULTY ISSUES:

- Infringement on the authority and responsibility of faculty to assign grades based upon assessment of student performance.
- Faculty were criticized for not offering the student an I or a W in a course for medical reasons when there was no medical documentation for doing so until after the semester was concluded. This decision then did not apply to all seven courses, but only the two in which the student did poorly.
- It is unrealistic to expect faculty to possess skills and perform tasks that are neither within their responsibility nor expertise. That is, faculty were told they should have some how be able to determine the student needed a medical withdrawal. Are faculty supposed to determine the medical health of all of their students performing poorly in all of their courses?
- Not only did the student not contact the faculty, but the program contacted student and requested the planning meeting, then subsequently (mid January) a meeting to discuss her performance. At no time prior to the end of the semester, did the student meet with the

instructors to find a solution. The student was given extra time as needed in order to complete assignments, but did not hand them in.

- Precedent setting in terms of failing or recording grades lower than the student desires.
- While the student was interviewed by the Vice Provost, faculty did not merit the same respect or professional courtesy as they were never contacted.
- The faculty didn't *give* an F or a C/D grade as stated; rather the student earned these grades.
- Faculty were denied due process in the decision by the Vice Provost.
- No procedural errors were found by the dean, nor reported by the Vice Provost.
- Disregard for the academic process and the procedures as published pg 36 of the Undergraduate Bulletin "The final disposition of the appeal is reserved to the dean of the college or director of the program in which the course was taken."
- Unprecedented action: according to the Office of the Registrar, a grade could only be changed by either the Dean or the Faculty in whose course the grade was earned. In the history of Marquette, the Administration has not previously changed the grade recorded by a faculty member. Despite this, the grades in question were changed.

2. STUDENT ISSUES:

- Medical information provided after the completion of the semester was used to retroactively change grades earned after a fair assessment of the student's performance.
- Grades were changes *selectively in only two of seven courses* in which grades of an F and a C/D were obtained during semester in which the student reported having a medical condition. Shouldn't all grades be withdrawn? A medical condition should not selectively influence performance in only two of the seven courses.
- The reversal demonstrates a complete lack of care and respect for other students that work hard and sometimes come up short. The reality is that students fail courses for various reasons and have to repeat them. This costs them time and money. What about all the students before this case and even across campus this semester that didn't succeed? Should we submit them to the VP office for review and financial compensation? Should grades be inflated and only passing grades be given?
- No other students have been offered the opportunity to have their failing grades expunged from their records retrospectively.
- The student was unjustly awarded an inflated GPA by removal of failing and low grades, and potentially given an unfair advantage over other hard working students with regard to admission to post graduate programs.
- Students must be responsible for their actions or lack of actions, which in this case are documented by the student choosing to not request an I or W during the semester.