

## **PROPOSAL: ACADEMIC STANDING**

### **Minimum Standards for Continued Enrollment**

All undergraduates with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or above are in good academic standing and are academically eligible to return for subsequent semesters.

#### **Academic Warning**

A student in good academic standing whose current *semester* GPA falls below 2.0 for any fall or spring semester will receive an academic warning and may be required to participate in advising, tutoring or academic skills interventions designed to improve academic performance, as well as a possible limit on the number of credit hours attempted. Academic warning is not recorded on the student's official record.

#### **Academic Probation**

A student whose *cumulative* GPA falls below 2.0 as of the end of a fall or spring semester will be placed on academic probation for the subsequent semester. A student may be enrolled in classes during a probationary semester, but may be required to participate in intensive advising, academic skills courses or workshops, and may be required to limit the number of credit hours attempted. Academic probation is recorded on the student's official record.

#### **Academic Suspension**

Following two consecutive semesters on academic probation, a student whose *cumulative* GPA and current *semester* GPA are both below 2.0 will be academically suspended from the university as of the start of the next regular semester.

A student who has received a suspension notification may attend the upcoming summer or winter session but is ineligible to be enrolled for the next fall or spring semester or any subsequent term unless formally reinstated. Academic suspension is recorded on the student's official record.

If the *cumulative* GPA remains below 2.0 but the current *semester* GPA is 2.0 or higher, such a student will be placed on academic probation for an additional semester.

#### **Reinstatement after Suspension**

A student who has completed at least 12 credits of academic courses at another institution with a GPA of at least 2.5 may apply for reinstatement. Reinstatement applications are reviewed by the Academic Actions and Reinstatement Committee. Courses completed at other institutions while the student was suspended from UMBC will be considered for transfer credit under the usual rules for transfer.

#### **Academic Dismissal**

After a student has been reinstated, the first instance of a *cumulative* GPA of less than 2.0 at the close of a fall or spring semester will result in academic probation. The second consecutive semester of a *cumulative* GPA less than 2.0 will result in dismissal from the university if the student's current *semester* GPA was also below 2.0. In general, a student who has been academically dismissed will not be considered for future reinstatement. If the student's *cumulative* GPA is below 2.0 but the *semester* GPA is 2.0 or higher, the student is placed on academic probation for an additional semester.

## Minimum Standards for Continued Enrollment Proposed Policy Fact Sheet

### Key Features:

- The importance of a 2.0 GPA as the threshold for good academic standing is clarified and reinforced.
- No academic action (suspension or dismissal) is taken unless **both** the *cumulative* and most recent *semester* GPAs are below 2.0.
- This proposal has the strong support of the professional advisors on campus who work with students in academic difficulty every day.
- This proposal will eliminate the phenomenon of large numbers of students being suspended or dismissed (with a notation on their transcripts) and then immediately reinstated.

### Advantages:

- The policy allows for timely, graduated, and strategic intervention when students experience academic difficulty.
- Although a larger number of students will receive “warnings” (academic warning or academic probation), the number of students subject to actions (suspension or dismissal) is not expected to change significantly in the near term. In the long term, effective early intervention is expected to reduce the numbers of actions taken.
- Freshmen and transfer students, both of whom experience UMBC adjustment challenges, will be treated equitably.
- Elimination of the “sliding scale” aspect of current policy will eliminate the phenomenon of students continuing to be enrolled at UMBC for years without a 2.0 semester or hope of graduation.
- The proposed policy is more consistent with policies at other universities, including our peers in the USM system and elsewhere.
- The policy establishes a new academic warning for students in good academic standing whose performance is deteriorating.
- The proposal creates a clear process for considering reinstatement applications that ensures input from faculty and professional advisors.
- The emphasis on early warning and intervention in this proposal will be reinforced by planned changes to expand the use of mid-semester academic alerts.

### Questions and Answers

#### 1. Will the proposed policy increase workloads for academic departments?

No, the policy is designed to encourage early identification and intervention, which generally means that fewer severe cases of prolonged academic difficulty (which are the most time-consuming) will remain. The Office for Academic and Pre-Professional Advising is ready to provide training and support for faculty advisors in the most effective means of assisting students on academic warning or academic probation. In addition, the new SA system will help when prerequisite checking and the course repeat policy are enforced in an automated fashion as of Fall 2009.

## **2. What are some of these “interventions” that can help struggling students? Is there evidence they are effective?**

Interventions include: counseling the student to take fewer credits, making sure that prerequisites, corequisites, and recommended courses have been taken and that students do not move on to the next course in a sequence without achieving a solid “C” grade in a course, encouraging students to consider a change of major if appropriate, and encouraging students to use the Learning Resource Center (tutoring, Math lab, Writing lab), English Language Center (ELC), and Student Support Services where appropriate. In addition, enrollment in LRC 101A Academic Success for Lifelong Learning for institutional credit has been shown to be helpful for students in academic difficulty. A structured advising appointment in which the sources of poor performance are explored and a written plan for improvement is developed can also be very helpful.

## **3. What is the impetus behind this proposed policy change?**

The current policy is confusing to students and faculty, labor intensive, and allows too many students to continue to be enrolled at UMBC despite many semesters of poor academic performance. The “sliding scale,” which sets a required minimum GPA based on the number of credits earned, lulls students into thinking they are in good academic standing despite a sub-2.0 GPA. Under the current policy, about half of the students nominally suspended are actually offered an opportunity to continue. Most often this is because their grades have improved in recent semesters, but not enough to raise the cumulative GPA to 2.0.

## **4. Approximately how many students are affected by these policies?**

About ten percent of degree-seeking undergraduate students (850-1050 in a semester, with higher numbers in the fall semesters) have cumulative GPAs under 2.0 and are therefore not in good academic standing at UMBC. After the Fall 2008 semester, nearly 900 students received notification of poor academic performance, ranging from academic jeopardy (first semester freshmen only) to probation, suspension, and dismissal. Under the new policy, all students with cumulative GPAs under 2.0 would receive notification of poor performance, increasing the numbers notified by 150 or so students, but the more important effect would be better placement of the sub-2.0 students into logical categories. In essence, there would be more warnings issued earlier, which we expect to lead to fewer actual suspensions and dismissals.