

## Proposal from the Communication Department on Grading Policy:

The WCSU Faculty Handbook states the following:

### FEDERAL GUIDELINES FOR GRADING AND PRIVACY OF GRADES

1. Faculty must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 to ensure that information on grades, class standing or the like of any student may in no way be shared by the faculty member with any other student. This means that the following practices will not be utilized.
  - a. Posting course, exam, or term paper grades even if names are omitted and codes are used.
  - b. Giving the paper or test of one student to another for delivery unless there is a signed request to do so.
  - c. Putting papers, tests, etc., in a common place for student pick up.
2. Recent confidentiality laws prohibit anyone from divulging the grades of any student to the student's parents or any other individual.

**3. Attendance requirements as related to grades awarded--Supreme Court rulings indicate that grades may be lowered for nonattendance only when a direct relationship between academic progress and attendance can be demonstrated. The arbitrary lowering of an earned grade for given numbers of class absences did not meet the Court's legal tests. (page 148)**

Recent discussion on campus has raised questions about whether item number three is based in fact. The concern is that this language was added long ago with little or no firm basis.

I investigated the issue on the Internet and was unable to locate a Supreme Court decision that addresses college policies, let alone a Circuit Court decision. I did find some evidence that in the interest of due process, K-12 schools must tie grades and attendance to educational interests. However, these cases seem to have more to do with being suspended for disciplinary reasons.

I checked the AAUP National website. There was nothing there on this issue. AAUP's focus is on keeping the right to assign grades in the hands of faculty as an issue of academic freedom. So I wrote to the AAUP legal counsel. This was the reply I received:

Dear Katy –

I apologize for the delay in responding. After a brief review of the materials we have here, **I'm not aware of Supreme Court precedent on tying grading to attendance in the higher education context.** I'm assuming that you saw our legal outline on grading –

<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/protect/legal/topics/whogrades.htm> - and I've also attached the AAUP policy on assignment of grades.

On another front, the AAUP maintains a database of collective bargaining contracts, which allows members of CB chapters to find out how particular issues have been dealt with in other contracts. So, for instance, you could use the database to search for "grading" or "attendance," to see how other institutions have established grading/attendance policies. I've attached a memo on how to access and use the database.

I hope this information is useful -

All the best,

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I then checked the database Rachel indicated and found relevant nothing there. The other information Rachel refers to is about grade appeals procedures.

Therefore the Communication Department proposes the following changes to the Faculty Handbook (delete language in strikethrough; add language in bold):

G. FEDERAL GUIDELINES FOR ~~GRADING AND~~ PRIVACY OF GRADES

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~~between academic progress and attendance can be demonstrated. The arbitrary lowering of an earned grade for given numbers of class absences did not meet the Court's legal tests.~~

#### **H. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GRADING POLICIES**

**1. When assigning grades instructors should keep in mind the following AAUP principles (from the AAUP *Policy and Documents Reports* 9<sup>th</sup> Edition):**

- a. "Professors [should] make every reasonable effort ... to ensure that their evaluations of students reflect each student's true merit."**
- b. "Students should have protection through orderly procedures against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation."**

**2. Instructors should consider these elements in designing their grading policies:**

- a. Students should be graded on academic performance.**
- b. Instructors should make grading expectations—both behavioral and academic—clear in their syllabi.**
- c. Instructors should avoid punitive grading systems.**
- d. Instructors should consider a policy that rewards or encourages attendance.**
- e. Attendance policies should be based on solid academic principles.**
- f. When including attendance or participation issues in a grading policy, instructors should indicate how the attendance or participation will be measured or evaluated.**
- g. Instructors should take the principles of freedom of religion and due process into account in designing an attendance policy.**
- h. Instructors should have a method in mind for making sure their attendance policy is administered fairly.**