

MINUTES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON STUDENT RECORDS

Wednesday, October 3, 2007

Present: N. Allard, J. Alton, C. Arseneault, S. Bezeau, M. Brettler, S. Comeau, N. Czermmel, N. De Takacsy, S. DiLollo, T. Harrington-Lau (Minute Taker), D. Hay, D. Lamfookon, F. Lees, F. Maniaci, J. Martuccio, M-J. McCullogh, L. Morin, M. Moscato, S. Pellicchia, A. Pacheco, M. Pietraroia, P. Pombo (Secretary), H. Ray, K. Reany, F. Ship, C. Spadafora, R. Vadivel, A. Walsh (Acting Chair), J. Younan, C. Zilberman

Regrets: L. Anand, G. Arsenault, J. Barrett, P. Bassett, J. Brossard, A. Cerrone-Mancini, E. De Michele, R. Del Degan, H. Emami, N. Gamal, S. Higgins, D. Jackson (Chair), F. Lisi, P. Smith, S.A. Soares-Blackwood, A-M. Wasacz, K. Wilmot, A. Zakka

1. Adoption of Agenda:

The agenda was adopted with the addition of one item.

4.6 Equivalencies for Math/Science courses – N. de Takacsy

Announcement: Doreen Lamfookon announced that the Management B.Com. Office has been restructured. The Director is Glenn Zabowski. She and Anne-Marie Wasacz will represent the Faculty at SCSR.

2. Adoption of Minutes:

The minutes for the meeting of September 5, 2007 were adopted with one addition. Celine Arseneault asked for this additional text to be added to her item.

4.3 Course registration problems for Nursing mandatory courses

"She would like to know if there is a way to address this problem from the beginning, i.e. once the courses for a specific program are approved by Senate as "mandatory" could there be a mechanism to ensure that students from that program can register with a minimum of problems. She said she thought this could benefit the whole university, not just Nursing."

3. Business Arising

3.1 Fee Information – M-J McCullogh

Mary Jo reported that the debit card machine in Student Accounts has been moved to the front counter from the cash wicket to improve service to students. She indicated that this move should improve the petty cash service since staff members will no longer have to wait in line with students, particularly during the end of the month fee payment deadlines.

Her office has had very few complaints about the decision not to accept cash payments from students for fees. The solution of providing students with payment slips for those who insist on paying with cash to take to the Royal Bank has worked well.

3.2 Student Information System – J. Barrett, H. Ray

Hugh Ray reported on the following "work in progress:"

- The Oracle 10G upgrade is in testing and so far proceeding well.
- Work is in progress for applying for deferred exams on Minerva. A demo was given to ISR and ARR staff the previous week and went well. The next step is a demo for Faculties.
- The program to solve the waitlisting problems experienced during fall registration is in production.
- ISR has begun work on the request from the Faculty of Science to split the sciences into two groups, Physical and Biological for the purposes of undergraduate applications.

- ISR is working on the CAPP request for a student attribute to be used to waive the Arts freshman area for students admitted into U1 with sufficient advanced standing credits
- The movement of McGill in Mind from the Edge server in Toronto to the McGill server has been completed.
- The SIS priorities list is being worked on; there should be a report at the next SCSR meeting.

3.3 Registration Issues – A. Walsh and H. Ray

Anna Walsh provided additional information about the waitlisting problems experienced during the last two day of the drop/add period. The waitlist email process aborted when a student in CE had no email address on the next to last day. The following day, email were sent out more frequently to students at the top of the waitlist and 30 were able to register before midnight.

Johnny Martuccio reported that CE had received a message from NCS that CE students had to be registered to get email accounts and therefore students on waitlists who are not actually registered in any other courses would not get email accounts. Anna said that this had been changed last year so that a student would only need an active student record to be given a email account.

Another registration issue for CE is a fee refund issue as CE students are not entitled to a full refund when they drop a course.

Anna reported that waitlisting doesn't work well for summer courses and fixing this may be added to the SIS priorities list.

Anna has gotten some statistics on enrollment in Arts and Science courses from other faculties, which she will refine before presenting it. She plans to exclude courses that are less than full. She hopes to present this information at the next SCSR meeting.

Nick de Takacsy said that the solution for course registration problems due to load on the system preferred by the CIO is time ticketing which gives students a specific time frame in which to register. Banner includes this functionality and McGill could decide to put resources into using it. However, he said he does not think this type of "lottery" system works well. Sharon Bezeau agreed noting that it is unfair to those students who are unable to register during the time frame assigned to them.

Anna said the Banner functioning for this is similar to a popsel selection process. One problem is that students who are admitted later than others have to be "picked" up by the system.

Mary Jo asked if there were any statistics on the numbers of students who don't get into courses they want. Fiona said the only information is anecdotal. Nick added that there is a system to ensure that students can get registered in courses they absolutely need and this would have statistics, but there are no figures for students who want a course and don't get in.

3.4 Exchange and Term-Away Project – H. Emami

Clara Spadafora reported for Heidi Emami who was attending the Student Exchange fair where she was giving a demo of the Exchange and Term-Away Project.

3.5 Students without mailing addresses on Minerva – A. Walsh

Anna reported Maria Pietraroia has returned from her maternity leave and would be working on developing the specs for the message to go to students needing to add mailing addresses on Minerva. She said that ARR was considering the use of hold codes during registration as a means of encouraging students to provide mailing addresses. Registration hold codes can either be for "warning" purposes only or can block a student's registration until the problem is resolved. The problem with warning codes is that they often confuse students. Students will wrongly assume the warning hold on their record is the reason they can't get into a course.

Anna noted that, as was done this fall, a message would be put on the Portal during registration advising students to add mailing addresses. She proposed that after registration, during the withdrawal period, ARR would run a process to check if a student had updated their address within the past month. If so, no hold would be added to the student's record. If not, a hold code would be added and an email sent asking the student to verify their mailing and emergency contact information on Minerva. A check box would be added on Minerva for students to confirm they had verified their address and contact information.

This wouldn't solve the problem of getting mailing addresses updated for students who don't need to use Minerva to register or withdraw from a course during this time period. There is also the issue of whether the hold codes should be removed before each registration period.

The key concerns from the discussion that followed are listed below.

1) Should hold codes be used to motivate students to provide mailing addresses and emergency contact information? Nick de Takacsy has serious reservations about using any type of hold code as incentive for students to update address and contact information. He recommended referring to CSA for a decision the question of whether or not it is a "mandatory requirement" for a McGill student to provide mailing address and contact information. He does not want students to be harassed over this issue without a clear decision that this information is a University requirement for registered students.

2) Should students be required to provide mailing addresses and emergency contact information? Mary Jo McCullogh said she thought this should be mandatory, and she would make a case for this to present to CSA.

3) The consensus among SCSR members from faculty student affairs offices and from student service units is that this information is needed. Law and Medicine communicate the importance of having this information to their students with good success. Education and Nursing have students who do not comply, and this causes problems. Romesh Vadivel pointed out that students can put false mailing and contact information on Minerva as there is no verification process for what is added.

Anna concluded that using a hold code to encourage students to add mailing addresses and emergency contact information is too strong an action for ARR to take at this time. Nick suggested implementing an email reminder process for mailing addresses combined with the addition of a checkbox on Minerva for students to confirm that they have verified or updated their address.

More discussion followed which related to the point in time at which students should be contacted and other details about setting up a process. Nick was concerned that a lot of bureaucratic machinery was being discussed to solve a problem relating to a very small number of students.

Mary Jo recommended that ARR develop an email process to contact students and see how well it works. There was a consensus that this was the approach to take.

It was also decided that because the collection of emergency contact information is not mandatory, reminders about the importance of providing this information would be made through postings on the portal as was done this fall.

4. New Business

4.1 Leave of absence and SZRFINAC report– A. Walsh

Anna explained that the SZRFINAC reports identifies students who are registered in courses in a term, but who are inactive. All faculties have been given access to this report. Each faculty will receive a reminder to let ARR know of those students in their faculty whose courses should not be dropped from their records. Anna explained that this is a process run after the end of fall registration to identify students who are inactive in the fall but registered in winter courses.

Anna recommended that a "leave of absence" code should be added to student records for those who are inactive in the fall term and who have faculty "approval" to keep their winter courses as a tracking device so that ARR could "activate" these students in the winter term and it would be clear that a decision had been taken to not delete winter courses.

Sylvana explained that some students in Agriculture are inactive in the fall term but have courses in the winter term because they "fell" behind in their programs at some point and do not need to take fall courses, only winter ones.

Mary Jo said that some leave of absence policies and procedures were developed between Student Accounts and the Faculty of Medicine and she would distribute these. One concern was for students to be able to keep their

health and dental insurance and so arrangements were made for students to pay student society fees related to these on a voluntary basis.

Romesh pointed out that students on leave of absence for more than one year could face problems with tuition assessments. The Quebec tuition rate expires for a student if they have only temporary Quebec residency status and are on leave for more than one year.

It was decided SCSR members should consult their units and send feedback to Fiona about their agreement to a process to add leave of absence coding to student records.

4. 2 Spring advising dates for the calendar of dates – A. Walsh

Anna said that the draft of the calendar of dates is to go out. ARR has noticed that Easter Monday falls into the week before registration which is normally identified in the calendar of dates for student advising. She asked that faculties consider whether a 4-day week of student advising is sufficient or if 5 days are required in which case an extra day from another week will need to be added.

4. 3 Exchange/term away students taking McGill courses – N. De Takacsy

Nick explained that there are occasions when a student takes a McGill course as well as being on an exchange or term of study away. There are GDEU reporting problems for these students as the Government wants to know how this is possible. Nick would like to have this option eliminated. Therefore, he asked for faculty feedback on why student might be permitted to do this.

Nicole Allard explained that for students in their last term on an exchange, they might need one McGill course to complete their residency requirement and could be permitted to do a McGill reading course while away.

Nancy said that Law has a research paper course for this type of situation.

Nick said that on-line courses should not be a problem and asked if Law would be willing to submit a proposal to SCTP for an on-line course for this purpose.

Mary Jo said that the Student Accounts Office has had complaints from students going on fall term study away their McGill fall term courses are still on their records. If possible, McGill courses should be removed by July 31st from the records of students doing fall term study away to avoid fee problems.

Clara's group has a process for removing courses for students going on exchanges. Students who are on study away are advised to remove their own courses. The Faculty Student Affairs office is usually responsible for ensuring that their registration has been removed when the term away course is added to their record.

Fiona noted that removing these courses in a timely manner will require better coordination between faculties and ARR.

4. 4 Iut Report – N. De Takacsy

Nick reviewed the IUT Report that was distributed with the agenda. This report is essentially a statistical comparison of student usage by university, area of study (domain), cycle (level), and term of the IUT approval process for taking courses at other Quebec universities. Nick asked that if any faculty has suggestions about "fine-tuning" the IUT process, they should forward these to him.

Chris Zilberman asked if it would be possible to have student grades shown on the original IUT form as part of the process. Nick asked Chris to submit this suggestion to him. He will speak with Clara and Zoran about it.

4. 5 Commissioner of Oaths and faculty's responsibility – N. Czettel

Nancy said that the Faculty of Law gets a number of requests from non-Law students to use their commissioner of oaths to certify documents. She wanted to know about what services are available in other faculties.

Medicine has a commissioner of oaths for their undergraduate students with the hospitals providing this service for students in graduate medicine.

The Direct Services unit of ARR has four people who provide this service. Jocelyn Younan explained that their service is not advertised as the unit does not want to have to do passports.

CE has three people to provide this service for government documents.

Agriculture has a commissioner of oaths who will provide the service for anyone needing documents for McGill.

Student Aid has a commissioner of oaths to provide services to students.

Nick asked Jocelyn to find out who is in charge of the web site for the commissioner of oaths and follow-up with them to ensure that there is appropriate information about who is served by each commissioner of oaths.

4.6 Equivalencies for Math/Science courses – N. De Takacsy

Nick explained that there is a sign-in access only list of equivalences for Math/Science freshman courses and organic chemistry courses on the ARR web site. He would like this web page to be moved to the public domain so that students could refer to it. He said that a proposal would be made at the next SCSR meeting to remove the sign-in.

On a related topic, he reported that students feel that the transfer credit approval process is overly bureaucratic and not transparent. He said that ARR is working on some ideas to streamline the process so that the transfer credits would be automatically processed for recognized "partner" institutions. As a second step, the student would have the task of asking the appropriate unit for equivalence to McGill course(s) for the fulfillment of program requirements.

He also reported the issue has come up of recording failed courses taken during an exchange on a student's McGill record. Some Quebec universities already do this as there are fee implications for students on Quebec bursaries.

Celine Arseneault asked if there was an established rule for recording course failures when students transfer from one faculty to another. Fiona said this depends on each faculty's interfaculty transfer rules. Sharon explained this was one of the decisions faculties were asked to make when McGill went to Banner. In Arts, for example, students can either bring all their courses with them or none when they transfer. For Science, all courses carry forward.

Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.