Annual Report
Academic Policy Committee
2000/2001 Academic Year


The Committee met five times during the academic year and considered several important issues:

The Committee discussed the Chancellor's memo on "Faculty Input into Commencement Improvements". After considerable review of the current commencement policy, the Committee, the Committee formulated the following recommendations:

a) Charge the Lectures Committee with the task of identifying a single high quality Commencement Speaker and provide an honorarium for the Speaker. In addition, a student should be selected by the Lectures Committee to address the assembly. Honorary degree recipients should not be considered as Commencement Speakers. This will improve the commencement experience and at the same time bring UWM the kind of favorable press seen after the recent commencement address by Robert Ballard.

b) The current program for the Hooding Ceremony should not be changed, however addition of a required rehearsal session would improve the Ceremony and reduce the length.

c) Limit those addressing the assembly to a 5-min Welcome by the Chancellor, the Commencement Speech, and a Student Speech. Members of the Board of Regents and Honorary Degree Recipients should be limited to only introductions. Information about the individuals can be provided in the Program text and highlighted on a background screen during the introductions. Move the presentation of the Gold Awards and the Alumni Teaching Excellence Awards to either the Alumni College or First Fridays.

d) Charging a graduation processing fee detracts from the celebration. Since the fee is necessary to defray the cost of graduation processing and additional costs such as an honorarium for the Commencement Speaker are recommended. It is important to maintain the revenue, however, incorporate the fee into other existing fee structures.

e) While it might be desirable to hand each graduate an official diploma, after review of the alternatives, the Committee does not consider handing each graduate an official diploma to be feasible and recommends that the current policy on award of diplomas be maintained. The change would require rescheduling of either commencement or final exams or both in a semester schedule that is already very tight. In addition, there would be a substantial increase in workload for both Enrollment Services and the Graduate School along with a large increase in cost.
f) Increase the celebration atmosphere of the ceremony by increasing music and dance exhibition, decorations, etc. Revise the Alma Mater. Advertise a competition for both new text and new music; open this up to UWM faculty, students, and alumni.

Overall, these recommendations are intended to improve the quality of the Commencement with brief high quality speeches, shortening the length of the entire program, focusing the Ceremony on the students, and increasing the celebration atmosphere. The current structure of one Ceremony for both undergraduate and graduate students across campus should be maintained. The Committee also suggests input from the graduates by means of a survey after Commencement for input on what they liked and disliked.

The proposed academic calendar was reviewed and approved by the Committee.

Enrollment Services requested the Committee to consider a potential change in implementing a registration policy with the OASIS system. Registration in the OASIS system will be on the web and will make it more difficult to maintain the current priority registration policy. The Committee concluded that students with disabilities, student athletes, and honors students should be given priority registration by allowing them to register before other students regardless of the credits earned.

The Committee developed a new Policy and Procedure for Awarding Degrees (Undergraduate) Posthumously. After considering a range of options for the required credits the Committee recommended a new policy that required at least 7/8 of the credits for a degree program must be completed for awarding the degree.

Submitted by V. Skrinska, 6/8/01