REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE DROP POLICY, TO THE
FACULTY SENATE

The Ad Hoc Committee to Study the Drop Policy, appointed by the University Committee as a fact-finding committee charged with responsibility for gathering pertinent information and opinion, evaluating arguments and suggestions, and making recommendations to the Faculty Senate, met with the Registrar, with counselors from various schools and colleges within the University, with pre-professional advisers, and with representatives from student groups. In addition, it held a public hearing attended by 75-100 persons and invited and received numerous telephone calls and letters from faculty, students, and administrative staff. As a result of these meetings, telephone calls, and other communications, the Committee would like to point out, as an introduction to this report, that the task of establishing an equitable and realistic Drop Policy for The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is more complex than it might be at a smaller institution with a more homogeneous student body.

One factor that contributes to the complexity of the task is the diversity in ability and preparation of UWM students. We do encourage students who might be rejected by more selective institutions to enroll here. We therefore have a wider than average range of student ability in academic subjects, from excellent on the one hand to marginal on the other. We do have a responsibility to all our students: to those who achieve excellence, to protect the reputation of their degree; to those who achieve marginally, to overcome deficiencies in preparation and otherwise to fulfill their potential ability which we recognized (and encouraged them to recognize) by admitting them. To do less for excellent students would be to handicap them in competition with students of like ability from other institutions; to do less for marginal students, after admitting them, would be less than humane.

Another factor contributing to the complexity of the task is the diversity in financial ability and in pressure of outside responsibilities among UWM students. Some are supported by their families. Many work part time to help support themselves. Many work full time and entirely support themselves. Some work full time to support themselves and dependents. Some who do not work have small children of their own or aging or handicapped parents or other relatives who have first claim on their time and energies.

Because these factors are significant, The Committee has received many arguments for and against UWM's present drop policy. Those who favor this drop policy tend to discount the arguments of those who oppose it, often with more heat than light; those who oppose it tend to discount the arguments of those who favor it—often with more heat than light. Many who have tried to examine all arguments objectively have suggested alterations and alternatives. Following is a summary of arguments for and against the present drop policy together with a list of suggested alterations and alternatives received by the Committee:

FOR PRESENT DROP POLICY

Gives students doing poorly the opportunity to seek assistance from advising and counseling services and to utilize these services over a meaningful period of time, perhaps avoiding an otherwise low grade or failure.

AGAINST PRESENT DROP POLICY

Encourages students to enter and remain in courses for which they are not adequately prepared.

Encourages absenteeism and late work, with a corresponding pejorative effect on the atmosphere of the classroom.

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FOR PRESENT DROP POLICY

Encourages students to try difficult courses.

Encourages students who otherwise might withdraw from the University to stay in school.

Relieves students of excessive pressure to obtain good grades; makes more learning possible in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Relieves student advising offices of time-consuming work of handling numerous appeals generated by a shorter drop policy, thereby freeing personnel for more important counseling duties.

Places counselors in "helping" rather than "enforcing" role.

Allows students with serious outside responsibilities (to job, family, etc.) to make necessary changes with minimum of red tape should outside circumstances warrant such a change.

Gives students greater responsibility for own education.

Makes for more uniform University policy since faculty vary in how liberally they give permission to drop under a shorter drop policy in which permission after 6, 8, or 10 weeks is required.

Permits greater latitude in time and technique for faculty members to develop more effective evaluation procedures.

Enables supervisors of student teaching in Education to counsel out in a humane manner students with otherwise satisfactory records who are not approved for teaching.

Social Welfare has a field work requirement which may make it difficult for students to handle their regular courses satisfactorily at times. Drop policy permits

AGAINST PRESENT DROP POLICY

Encourages shopping around for easy courses and/or high grades, with a corresponding pejorative effect on the atmosphere of the classroom.

Makes it difficult to ascertain enrollment for any course at any time during the semester, with a corresponding pejorative effect on classroom atmosphere and course organization.

Gives false sense of accomplishment to students who have obtained A, B, or C grades through a process of dropping late and reenrolling in the same course two or more times, thus encouraging them to pursue programs of study for which they are ill-equipped and in which ultimately, they fail. Such "stringing" along is not only demoralizing, expensive, and wasteful but presents or postpones attainment of realistic educational and career goals.

Burdens Registrar's office with added paper work for longer time periods, as a result of increased drops throughout the semester, thus hampering the efficient performance of other record-keeping tasks.

Discredits the GPA as a measure of a UW student's ability and/or achievement, forcing graduate schools and professional schools to rely more heavily on the results of such tests as the Graduate Record Examination in evaluating a UW student's application.

Artificially inflates the GPA for all students, thus devaluing the UW degree, putting UW students who apply to graduate or professional schools at a disadvantage in competition for admission and financial aid, and putting job-seeking UW students at a disadvantage in competition for career openings.

Is expensive for both the student and the taxpayer.

Puts "C" students at a disadvantage in large classes where grades are curved and "D" and "F" students have dropped; ("C" becomes an F).
FOR PRESENT DROP POLICY

them to withdraw from courses without penalty because of the demands of field work, which must take priority.

Preserves integrity of grading system because faculty advise students to whom they otherwise might give a "gentleman's C," to drop.

Preserves dignity of student who wishes to drop for personal reasons.

AGAINST PRESENT DROP POLICY

Results in students being closed out of courses that actually are not filled but which other students have not dropped officially.

Encourages dropping after final examination is given and graded in courses in which the examination is given and graded during the last week of class; encourages dropping after final examination is distributed in courses in which take-home examination is distributed during the last week of class.

Results in de facto violation of University policy on audits.

Results in de facto A, B, C, NR grading system although this system was rejected by the faculty.

Results in faculty encouraging poor students to drop instead of giving them the additional help they need.

Provides an artificial atmosphere in which students may postpone decisions, ignore deadlines, and otherwise avoid functioning maturely.

The following is a summary of recommendations received:

Shorten drop period to 8-10 weeks, asking faculty to administer midterm tests or otherwise provide information concerning student progress at least one week before the end of the drop period.

Keep present policy, but record "W" on student's permanent record for all drops after three-week add-drop period. In addition, require department signature (not approval), for record-keeping purposes only, on all drop cards, thus enabling departments to keep track of enrollment figures for department courses.

Charge a per credit fee, rather than a blanket fee for full-time enrollment to discourage late drops.

Change to A, B, C, NR grading policy (with shorter drop policy).

Give part-time as well as full-time students opportunity to use deferred tuition-payment plan.

Require faculty to submit brief description of specific courses offered in each semester, with indication of number and nature of assignments/readings/papers/examinations expected and basis for grading, so that students may make better informed choices geared to their specific interests, needs, and outside commitments.
Change the quality points earned for letter grades to reflect not only the letter grade itself but the time taken to achieve it.

Refuse refunds in restricted enrollment courses.

Require permission from a Dean or Department Chairman for withdrawal from a restricted enrollment course.

Give students averaging D or F late in the semester an I and allow them to repeat or do extra work to improve grade.

Give students averaging C same option as above if they request it.

Restrict number of drops permitted, as number of p/f and cr/nc courses now are restricted.

Increase original enrollment maximums for restricted enrollment courses on the basis of average number of drops estimated from prior experience.

In weighing the arguments and suggested alterations and alternatives listed above, the Committee applied the following guidelines:

- UWM Drop Policy should:
  1. encourage an environment conducive to learning,
  2. protect academic standards and the value of a UWM degree,
  3. treat students equitably, with a minimum necessity for appeals and other complex procedures,
  4. provide avenues for handling special cases,
  5. make adequate provision for restricted enrollment courses,
  6. be one that can be administered economically and efficiently.

In the overall balance, the majority view of the Committee was that the current policy of permitting drops through the last day of class offers significant desirable features which probably outweigh the considerable disadvantages. We therefore propose to retain this basic approach, but submit the following modifications to present policy, as motions, effective Semester I, 1974-1975:

The present drop policy should be continued with the following modifications:

1. All drops after the end of the eighth week of classes should be recorded as "W" on the student's permanent record.

Rationale: While the Committee believes that a student should have as much freedom of choice as possible in pursuing a program of study, it also believes that the student's record should accurately reflect that pursuit. Recording drops after the eighth week will provide graduate schools and other groups which may evaluate a student's record with additional information they need for such evaluation and will encourage students not to delay drop procedures in courses which they can decide early in the semester. On the other hand, it will not restrict drops for students who cannot make a decision that early or whom circumstances force to drop at a late date.

2. That for record-keeping purposes only, departmental signature be required for all adds and drops. No department shall have the right to withhold its signature from a student wishing to drop through the last day of classes, however, except as noted in No. 4 below.

Rationale: The Committee finds that one of the most significant objections to the present policy is the fact that it is difficult for an instructor to keep track of who is in his class at any given moment. The proposed procedure permits those departments which wish to do so to institute
procedures for notifying an instructor immediately of each drop. It also relieves the Admissions and Records office of the increasing pressure for more and more frequent publication of revised class lists.

3. That the signature of the student should also be required on all add(drop) forms.

**Rationale:** At present it is possible for an instructor or department to initiate drop procedures for a student without his knowledge and/or permission. Such a decision properly belongs to the student.

4. That permission of the department should be required to drop limited enrollment courses (designated as such in the semester timetable, in accordance with present drop policy).

**Rationale:** Studio and laboratory courses with a limited capacity or number of work stations are handled presently in this way to minimize the number of students who might be excluded because other students occupy places for only part of the semester. The policy is an important factor in permitting departments to ensure maximum utilization of limited resources. The Committee wishes to be sure that this policy is spelled out clearly and protected. It should be noted that, as in all matters of timetable, courses are designated "limited enrollment" by the department and this designation is submitted to the Dean for approval.

5. That the present restrictions against taking for credit a course previously audited be eliminated.

**Rationale:** The present drop policy in effect permits auditing before taking a course for credit. The two policies should be consistent.

In addition, the Committee would like to draw the attention of the Faculty to the following problems which have surfaced as a result of its investigations:

1. Faculty who do not report grades or who do not use the grading system approved by the faculty leave a student in the ambiguous position of having a course listed on the permanent record with no indication of whether it ever was completed. The Committee recommends that Admissions and Records be instructed to notify appropriate Deans and Department Chairmen of such variations from standard grading procedures in order that a more satisfactory solution for the student may be found.

2. While statistical data essential to an accurate evaluation of the effects of the present drop policy—on grades, original and final enrollment figures, closed courses, etc.—have been compiled for L&S courses (and the Committee therefore did, in some instances, generalize from L&S experience), there appears to have been no University-wide computation of such figures. The Committee recommends that in the future such statistical data be compiled on a University-wide basis for analysis.

3. Students do complain of lack of information concerning course offerings and argue that it is responsible for "shopping." The Committee, therefore, urges that departments draw up brief descriptions of specific courses offered in each semester with an indication of the number and nature of assignments/readings/papers/examinations expected and the basis for grading, so that
students may make better informed choices geared to their specific interests, needs, and outside commitments.

The Committee asks the Secretary of the Faculty to attach to this document a copy of present drop policy as approved by the Faculty, for reference.

AD HOC COMMITTEE TO STUDY DROP POLICY
John F. Bibby
Janet E. Dunleavy, Chairman
Gerald Gleason
Robert Harrison
E. Alexander Hill
Corliss Phillabaum

Minority View of John F. Bibby

While I support the recommendations of the Committee to modify the current drop policy and to encourage faculty compliance with official grading policy, it is my opinion that the proposed changes do not go far enough toward satisfying the six guidelines (objectives) for the drop policy specified in the Committee report. I therefore recommend adoption by the Faculty Senate of the following additional provision:

That students may drop courses without departmental or dean's approval up until the end of the 8th week of classes. Thereafter such alterations in a student's program must be approved by the Dean of the School or College in which the student is enrolled and evidence of extenuating circumstances will be required.

Minority Views of John F. Bibby, Janet E. Dunleavy, and E. Alexander Hill

While we support the recommendations of the Committee to modify the current drop policy and to encourage faculty compliance with official grading policy, it is our opinion that the first of the proposed modifications should read as follows:

1. All drops after the end of the third week of classes should be recorded as a "W" on the student's permanent record.

Rationale: In addition to the reasons for recording a "W" described in the majority report, we believe that making the date after which drops are so recorded after the third rather than after the eighth week of classes has the advantage of being consistent with the "add" period, thus encouraging students who wish to drop to make their drops official during the period when their place in class may be taken by another student. Such a practice would in no way restrict drops for students who cannot make a decision that early or whom circumstances force to drop at a later date.