Recommendation of the Academic Affairs to amend Resolution 3, Faculty Document 654, dated April 8, 1971.

Resolution 3, Faculty Document 654:

The student may drop a class any time prior to the first day of the final exam period. However, a department may with departmental advice and consent of the dean of the appropriate school designate special courses with limited lab facilities, which can be dropped only upon the written consent of the instructor after the second week of classes. These courses are to be so indicated in the schedule of classes.

The Academic Affairs Committee has studied the pros and cons of the present drop policy at UWM in great detail during the past few months. Most members of the Committee appear to feel that, in general, the present policy is one which responds well to the lifestyle and unique needs of the student body of a major urban university such as UWM. Commuting, working students frequently need to make changes in class schedules because of shifts in job requirements, difficulties in finding reasonable and adequate day care facilities, special family responsibilities at home and economic problems.

The Committee could not find sufficient and compelling evidence to demonstrate that the present policy is academically unsound both as to grade "inflation" (which has not been excessive at UWM and appears not to be out of line with the national trend) and with regard to the question of wastefulness of educational resources.

The major positive aspects of the policy are that students are free to take courses in which they have genuine interest but for which they sometimes lack knowledge and skills and to continue to work at mastering them over a long period of time. If they do not succeed in their efforts at the level of their expectations, they have still benefitted from the exposure and effort. Such interest and desire for knowledge, even if aborted, should not be punished but rather permitted, thereby encouraging the student to improve his/her performance the next time.

With today's uneven primary and secondary educational systems, there is a great likelihood that some students' knowledge and understanding will fall short of that needed for required or elective courses even where they may have native ability to reach those standards. The present policy gives these students time to seek tutoring services and other forms of assistance over an adequate period of time.
In our judgment, the existence of the present drop policy does not lessen the value of a UWM degree but rather reinforces the sound educational principle that some students will take longer than others to master the same material -- just as they might stretch out their education longer for financial, health, child-rearing or other reasons.

Despite an affirmation of the present policy as basically helpful to students, philosophically sound and academically workable, there are problems generated by it that might be overcome through a modification of present procedures.

The percentage of end of semester drops has continued to increase over the past several years. For example, in December of 1974, there were 4,612 drops, representing a 21.7 percentage of all of the drops in that semester. Many students tend to delay turning in drop cards until the last week even though they may have dropped a course much earlier in the semester. Although this may not be a true indication of the total number of "late" drops their large number cause the following problems:

1. Class lists sent to instructors at the beginning of final exam week do not reflect late drops. (This results in many grades unnecessarily computed and reported by instructors, and sometimes appearing on students' first grade reports. This often causes confusion in advising students, developing accurate Senior Summaries and sometimes in determining admission to professional Schools within the University. It is unrealistic to believe that a Records Office with frozen resources could process that volume of drops in time to avoid this confusion.)

2. In many courses, final examinations are given during the last week of classes or take-home examinations assigned. Students who drop a course in the final class week after an exam has been taken have an unfair advantage over students in classes where the original schedule is followed.

The problems cited above could be resolved by the simple step of moving the deadline for dropping classes back to ten (10) class days prior to final exam week. It seems reasonable that this period of time would make little or no difference in a student's ability to determine whether he/she wishes to complete a given course. Hardship and other special cases during these two weeks would probably be few in number and might be handled through administrative action.

In this way the positive intent of the present drop policy will be retained while minimizing problems involved in its application.
Recommendation: That Faculty Document 654, Resolution 3, be amended so that the first sentence reads:

"The student may drop a class up to ten class days prior to the first day of the final exam period."

1975-76 Academic Affairs Committee
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