

Great Basin College
Faculty Senate
Academic Standards Committee

Written Committee Report – 21 April 2014

Meeting convened at 4:00 pm in Elko HTC 123; Pahrump PVC 115; Winnemucca GBC 123
Present: Scott A. Gavorsky (Chair); Jan King; Doug Hogan; Mike Elbert; Scott Nielsen [quorum]
Absent: Diane Wrightman; Earl Owen
Guest: Pat Johnson

The meeting was held to GBC's current procedures for the granting of non-traditional credit. Pat Johnson, the Adult Learning Concierge for the TAACCCT Grant, was invited to the meeting because of Grant interest in the non-traditional credit issue.

Currently, non-traditional credit is granted on a per case basis by student petition. Currently, students may only apply for such credit after having completed 15 hours at GBC, to provide a level of "buy-in." The petition goes through Jan King, who then either applies existing credit practices (for example, credit for certain recognized military specialties or training) or refers the matter to the department chairs for recommendations. Once the department chairs approve the granting of credit, the Academic Standards Committee votes on the request. If approved by Academic Standards, the request is referred to Faculty Senate for a vote. All total, the process of granting non-traditional credit can take months before the student is granted credit.

Students can receive up to 15 credit hours of non-traditional credit through the above process (although such credit would be non-transferrable), and the opportunity to receive an additional 30 credit hours through challenge exams. It is possible for students to earn a GBC degree with only 15 hours of in-residence work.

Jan King provided some background on how some other NSHE institutions handle the granting of non-traditional credit:

- GBC is unique in requiring Faculty Senate approval for the granting of non-traditional credit.
- CSN: Decision for acceptance of credit lay with department chairs, and there is a \$25 fee to apply for non-traditional credit.
- WNC: Decision lays with the registrar, who consults with departments.
- TMCC: Decisions for non-traditional credit lay with the deans EXCEPT for proprietary transfers (from non-accredited for-profit institutions such as Straighterline.com), which are handled solely at the discretion of the Vice-President of Academic Affairs.
- Pat Johnson added the practice of portfolios of work experience that could be used for the determination of non-traditional credit. Such portfolios would be judged by the departments.

Jan King and Pat Johnson provided some statistics on non-traditional credit acceptance since 2011 (when the current PeopleSoft system was adopted). Between 2011 and Fall 2013, 97 requests for non-traditional credit were submitted and awarded. Of those, 70 concerned veterans

seeking credit for military credit, which were handled routinely. The remaining 27 requests followed the complete process outlined above. Even though this averages to roughly 10 per year, the amount of personnel and committee time utilized is extremely high.

The Committee was also informed that student request for Straighterline.com credit discussed in the meeting of 28 February 2014 was not acted upon by the student, who declined to take the challenge exams offered by the departments.

The concern at the present time is two-fold:

1. With the potential expansion of GBC's service area and increased enrollment, the number of students requesting such transfers might increase significantly.
2. Proprietary transfer credits from for-profit firms such as Straighterline.com are likely to become more common, and GBC currently lacks a policy to deal with these requests. At the moment, no clear idea of how common these requests might become exists.

The Committee discussed various issues concerning non-traditional credit:

- Military service transfers are not problematic, and the Committee sees no reason to change how GBC is currently handling these requests.
- The Committee agrees that some level of student "buy-in" to GBC is preferable to prevent students taxing GBC resources by requesting transfer credit processing ("credit shopping"), although the current policy of "completing" 15 hours might be too stringent. The Committee discussed changing the current requirement to "completed or currently enrolled in 15 credit hours."
- The possibility of a fee for the consideration of non-traditional credit be used to offset cost and discourage "credit shopping." The Committee felt that such a fee should be proportional to the credit hours being considered. For example, the fee for 6 credit hours would be double that for 3 credit hours. [Addendum: Such a fee would have to follow the procedures for instituting a lab fee.]
- The Committee strongly felt that proprietary institutions such as Straighterline.com are difficult to assess. While there is some recognition that such institutions might offer rigorous courses, there is little way to verify this directly by the committee.

The Committee reached the following decisions:

- Departments should play the key role in the decision to grant non-traditional credit within their disciplines.
- The possibility of requesting Faculty Senate to consider an amendment to its by-laws to allow Academic Standards to be the final judge of non-traditional credit, with the results filed with Faculty Senate as an information item rather than an action item requiring a vote, will be explored.
- The possibility of approval of proprietary institutions by NSHE or associated bodies rather than individual departments or the Academic Standards will be explored.
- The Committee will continue to consider the various issues concerning non-traditional credit with another discussion to take place in May 2014.