

Rutgers University Senate
Academic Standards, Regulations, and Admissions Committee
Response to Charge S-0807

S-0807 Add/Drop Period: Consider and report on the [Proposal](#) on the add/drop period submitted by Senator Candice Greaux, and the [related resolution from the Rutgers University Student Assembly](#). Consult with financial aid personnel at Rutgers when discussing the issues in the proposal and resolution. Respond to Senate Executive Committee by December 2009.

Background

Prior to the fall 2000 semester, the add period was 5 days and the drop period 10 days. This add/drop configuration had begun to cause serious problems because many students were registering for one or two courses more than they ultimately wished to take and then dropping the extra course or courses toward the end of the drop period when it was too late for other students to add the courses. The results were empty seats in a number of courses coupled with other students being unable to enroll in the courses they wanted. To address this problem, the add/drop period was changed, on a trial basis, to seven days to drop and nine days to add for the spring 2001 semester. ASRAC reviewed this trial in April 2001 and concluded that the extended add and shortened drop period had achieved the goal of substantially decreasing the number of empty seats in courses and permitting more students to get into all the courses they wanted. On the other hand, the two extra days to add caused problems in some writing courses and problems in Newark with cross-registrations with NJIT. ASRAC then recommended, and the Senate approved, a drop period of seven days and an add period of eight days for the fall 2001 semester. In April 2002, the Senate approved this add/drop period on a permanent basis.

Committee Discussions

ASRAC considered this charge at three successive committee meetings: on May 1, September 25, and October 23, 2009. In our discussions of the charge, three major arguments were put forth in support of lengthening the current seven-day drop period and eight-day add period:

1. The current length of the add/drop period presents a serious problem for some students who are registered for a course that meets once a week late on the last day of the drop period (e.g., on Monday afternoon or evening when the semester started on the previous Tuesday). Such students have only a few hours to decide if they wish to stay in the course or drop it and if they decide to drop it, they have less than one day to try to find a suitable replacement course.
2. Some students argue that they need more time to make fully informed choices concerning their course schedule because detailed syllabi for many courses are not available before the first class meeting, making it difficult to know if the courses they initially selected are suitable for them.
3. Other students argue that the drop period should be extended because students who drop a course early in the second week of classes should not have a W on their transcript for that course.

ASRAC members found the first argument compelling and agreed to recommend lengthening both the add and drop periods by one day. Faculty members on the Committee were strongly opposed, however, to any further lengthening of the add period because, they argued, having students join a course much after the beginning of the second week of classes puts those students at a serious disadvantage and can be seriously detrimental to the conduct of the course.

Committee members were also sympathetic to the problem of students who are forced to wait for the first class meeting to find out what is required in a particular course. Members believe, however, that this problem should be addressed by greatly increasing the number of faculty posting course syllabi online well in advance of the beginning of the semester, rather than by substantial lengthening of the add/drop period.

There was initially some support on the Committee for extending the drop period several additional days. However, members were reminded why the add period was made longer than the drop period in 2001; namely, to prevent students from registering for extra courses and dropping them when it was too late for other students to add those courses. Such “hoarding” of seats in courses caused serious problems in 2000; it would cause far more serious problems today, given the shortage of space in many courses caused by recent budget cuts. In the end, everyone agreed that the add period should remain longer than the drop period.

Recommendations

Based on the above considerations, we offer three recommendations in response to charge S-0807.

1. *We recommend that the current add/drop period be lengthened by one day; i.e., to an eight-day period to drop and a nine-day period to add, for the fall 2010 and spring 2011 semesters.*
2. *We recommend that these changes in the add/drop period be made on a trial basis and that ASRAC be charged with evaluating the results of the changes near the end of the spring 2011 semester and making a recommendation as to whether further changes should be made.*
3. *We recommend that Executive Vice President Furmanski, the Newark and Camden Chancellors, and the Deans of the various schools and colleges increase their efforts to convince faculty members to make syllabi available online for all courses during the preregistration period or at least well before the beginning of the semester. These syllabi should make it clear what the course requirements will be and on what basis students' work will be assessed, as well as what material will be covered.*

Note: This last recommendation is largely a reiteration of a recommendation made by the Instruction, Curriculum, and Advising Committee in its [“Report and Recommendations on Availability of Syllabi”](#) approved by the Senate in October 2006; namely,

“Departments should maintain current course descriptions, including information on expected work and grading structure (assignments, papers, projects, exams and other methods of evaluation) on their departmental web sites and then make those descriptions available via the Course Synopsis System.”

Unfortunately, this recommendation has still not been implemented fully. An unofficial survey of New Brunswick undergraduate course listings carried out by Senator Julie Traxler and her staff in March 2009 for the Instruction, Curriculum, and Advising Committee, indicated that the majority of departments/undergraduate major programs in New Brunswick still have at best only generic course descriptions, rather than course syllabi, linked to the Course Synopsis System or otherwise available on departmental web sites.

2009-2010 ASRAC

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