



## Academic Standards, Regulations and Admissions Committee

January 17, 2021

### Report of the University Academic Standards, Regulations, and Admissions Committee on Charge A-2021: Re-Examination of the Add-Drop Period During the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond

#### Charge:

*Consider if and how the Add-Drop period should be adjusted for Spring 2021 assuming that the University will once again be offering most instruction remotely. Also, evaluate the standard structure of the Add-Drop period and assess whether the changes instituted by the Senate several years ago, having the Add period extend one day beyond the drop period, have had the desired effects. Respond to the Senate Executive Secretary by December 28, 2020.*

#### Background:

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education Carolyn Moehling submitted this charge to investigate if and how the Add-Drop period should be adjusted for the Spring 2021 semester in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for subsequent semesters. At the regular meeting of the Senate Executive Committee on December 4, 2020 the above charge was issued to the Academic Standards, Regulations, and Admissions Committee (ASRAC).

In the past, concerns had arisen that when students dropped courses at the last possible moment, insufficient time remained for students who had been hoping to take up the newly released sections to discover and enroll in them. Following a successful trial period, in January 2012 ASRAC submitted its final report on Charge S-0807A, in which it recommended: "Recommendation 1: The trial add/drop period shall be made permanent; i.e., henceforth, students will have eight calendar days to drop a course, and nine calendar days to add a course each semester."

Charge A-2021 was submitted by the Administration in response to two perceived problems: (1) as both faculty and students struggle to adjust to changes required by the switch to remote instruction, students may need more time to make properly informed decisions; and (2) there have been reports that an unintended side-effect of the current policy is that in the additional Add day, some students are still unable to add recently released courses because they are themselves then unable to drop less desirable courses with which they have filled up their schedules.

As an emergency measure, the Add/Drop period for Fall 2020 was extended. Initially, the Drop date was set to be after the Add date; following consultation between the Administration and Senate Officers, the dates were set for Monday, September 14 for both Add and Drop – allowing 14 days for each. Charge A-2021 seeks guidance on what should be done in Spring 2021, and what the policy should be going forward, regarding (1) the length of the Add-Drop period; (2) whether Add and Drop should be coterminous, or whether one should extend beyond the other.

It may be noted that whereas the policy previously piloted and recommended by ASRAC had had unintended consequences that either of the other solutions might address, extending Drop beyond Add (as originally planned for Fall 2020) potentially has undesirable side-effects such as leaving unfilled slots in highly desirable and sought-after courses, and possible cancelation of course sections falling

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below minimum levels at the last moment, too late for additions. Further, some students may find they are unable to make use of this extension because they cannot drop a course without losing full-time status and are unable to add something else to mitigate this situation.

The Committee Co-chair RA Schwartz requested committee member Gavin Mayes (student Senator, RU-NB) to solicit input from students prior to the formal ASRAC meeting on Friday, December 11, 2020. Mr. Mayes, who is also a member of the RUSA (Rutgers University Student Assembly), was able to obtain student input and presented it in the ASRAC meeting of Dec 11, 2020. The discussions that took place in the ASRAC meeting that day and the resolutions (recommendations) that followed are presented below.

### **Considerations:**

ASRAC reviewed and analyzed the detailed data provided by the RUSA ([Fall 2020 Pass/No Credit Survey Report](#)) which showed 1,825 students out of 7,405 (24%) had “major changes to the syllabus and/or structure of the course” after the Add-Drop period concluded. Pages 28 through 30 of the RUSA report also contained detailed student testimonials on the nature of the changes and the corresponding impact on the overall course quality. In addition to the RUSA report, ASRAC members received input from student leadership through both RUSA and ASRAC member Gavin Mayes. For instance, ASRAC Co-chairs invited input from the President and members of RUSA on Thursday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Based on the information received and discussions that took place in the ASRAC meeting on December 11, 2020, the following was stressed:

- The overwhelming majority of student testimonials show that changes in courses were occurring well into the semester, some of them even into the fourth or fifth week of classes when the initial midterms were administered.
- We need to support the learning efforts of our students and the instructional efforts of our faculty in this uniquely challenging time.

Therefore, ASRAC unanimously agreed on the following:

### **Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1. Have the Add-Drop period at ten days with an eleventh day as a “switch day”**

In the current *Add-Drop* period, the deadline to Drop a course with a W grade occurs one day before the deadline to Add a course. The *Add* period should be designated at ten days, with the period to *drop* a course at the same time. Ten days for Drop was judged as a sufficient extension, from the previous eight. ASRAC recognized the Administration emergency extension policy of Add-Drop to 14 days in this Fall semester and suggested ten days would be a reasonable compromise to bridge the gap between the prior 8-day policy and the emergency measure. After considering input from the Senate Executive Committee (EC), we enhanced our recommendations by including a “switch day”, suggested by ASRAC and EC member Marie Yamaoka. On an eleventh day, which we proclaim a “switch day”, the student can only add a course if that student is also dropping a course and vice versa. We anticipate that this modification will mitigate the expressed concerns.

#### **Recommendation 2. Promote an appeals process to drop a course(s) after the Drop Period**

Add an appeals process that will extend beyond the currently designated Add/Drop deadline for three weeks. During this three-week period beyond the designated Add/Drop period, students may appeal to their appropriate dean or academic advisor to have a course dropped without receiving the designation of withdrawn or W in their transcript. Students will prepare a written statement outlining their reasons for

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appeal for late drop course accompanied by appropriate documentation. It is recommended all appeals will be notified in writing and conducted in the aforementioned three-week time period.

### **Recommendation 3.**

ASRAC has been asked for recommendations for the Spring 2021 semester. The Committee feels that our recommendations would be useful for future semesters as well.

### **Implications of policy changes**

- Implications for students: Under the present policy, students lack the ability to drop a course after the drop deadline without the student transcript being marked with a “W” for withdrawn. The proposed rule gives students additional flexibility to make a more informed decision, especially in these challenging times. This change would afford students the ability to ascertain their suitability for the course along with congruency with work schedule and timing of classes. The rationale behind having an extended Add/Drop Period is to give students additional flexibility in rendering a decision and avoiding the possible need for an appeals process.
- Implications for faculty: Extending the appeals process by three weeks after the drop-period leads to uncertainty of enrollments - possibly falling below a minimal enrollment requirement which affects University’s optimal utilization of classroom space and other resources. Faculty members tend to prefer that students not wanting in their class be able to leave, accommodating the wishes of both student and faculty member.
- Implications for the Administration: The appeals process encourages additional administrative load on chairs and / deans offices. Anticipated students dropping of courses due to the appeals process would add uncertainties in terms of planning and allocation of resources.

### **Conclusions:**

- Recognizing the fact that we are facing unprecedented academic circumstances, for both faculty and students, a need for extending the timeframe for Add/Drop in Spring 21 will afford students greater flexibility in their course selections. As evidenced by the overwhelming majority of comments from students and faculty which point to needed changes occurring during the fourth or fifth week of classes, when the initial exams are administered. Recommendations 1 & 2 will give students more time to review all course requirements coupled with assignments as designated in their course syllabus within the synchronous/asynchronous timeframe.
- We need to support the efforts of our students and faculty in this uniquely challenging time. We expect that this strategy will ease the necessary transitions into remote course delivery in allowing more time to review course requirements and pre-requisite core skills and hopefully mitigate much of the students’ anxiety with online course learning and testing.

## **ASRAC Response to Charge A-2021: Re-Examination of the Add-Drop Period Resolutions**

Be it resolved that the Rutgers University Senate recommends that:

1. The Add period will be fourteen (14) calendar days, with the period to Drop extended to fourteen calendar days, allowing students to drop a course if they so choose. On the fifteenth day, which we term a “switch day”, a student can only add a course if that student is also dropping a course and vice versa.
2. Institute an appeals process that extends three subsequent weeks after the designated Add-Drop period. During this time frame, students have the right to appeal to the appropriate dean or academic advisor to have a course dropped without receiving the designation of withdrawn or W into the student transcript.

Submitted respectfully,

Babu Dasari (Co-Chair)

Robert A. Schwartz (Co-Chair)

Members, Academic Standards, Regulations and Admissions Committee (ASRAC), Rutgers Univ. Senate

Rahshida Atkins; Camden At-Large, Faculty

Anne-Catherine Aubert; School of Arts & Sciences-NB, Faculty

Sanjib Bhuyan; School of Environmental & Biological Sciences, Faculty

Jiuyang Chen; School of Management & Labor Relations, Student

Cecile Feldman; Rutgers School of Dental Medicine, Dean

Lucille Foster; RBS Dean Newark Staff

Neil Kothari; New Jersey Medical School, Faculty

Howard Marchitello; Faculty of Arts & Sciences-Camden, Dean

Gavin Mayes; School of Arts & Sciences-NB, Student

Moriah Mendicino; School of Law-Camden, Student

Donna Nickitas; School of Nursing-Camden, Dean

Suja Patel; Newark Staff

Cathryn Potter; School of Social Work, Faculty

Sofia Pinto-Figueroa; School of Arts & Sciences-Newark, Dean’s Designee

Sue Shapses; School of Environmental & Biological Sciences, Faculty

Nikita Shankar; School of Arts & Sciences-NB, Student

Weijie Song; School of Arts & Sciences-NB, Faculty

Ted Szatrowski; Rutgers Business School: Undergraduate NB, Faculty

Marie Yamaoka; School of Arts & Sciences-NB, Student