

Examiner Bulletin



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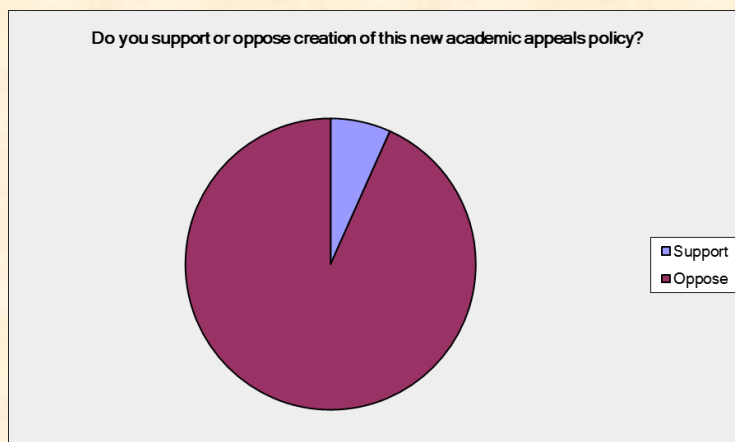
November 10, 2014

The Results Are In!

Local 240 Member Survey on the New Academic Appeal Policy

On October 20 the executive of Local 240 launched a short survey on the College's new Academic Appeals Policy. The survey ran until November 4 on Survey Monkey, and in this time 134 faculty responses were recorded.

Do you support or oppose creation of this new academic appeals policy?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Support	6.7%	9
Oppose	93.3%	125
	<i>answered question</i>	134
	<i>skipped question</i>	0



Survey respondents were also asked to provide comments regarding their support for or opposition to the Appeals Policy. Every respondent left comments, which indicates the level of concern that faculty have for this proposed change to academic appeals.

Some comments in support of the new Academic Appeals Policy included:

“Gives another opportunity to pass the course. I do think there needs to be more in terms of supporting documentation as to why the course was failed in the first place.”

“It is clear in direction; however it needs some rework. In effect since a retake of an exam is possible, a 45% grade is now considered a pass.”

“Current policy is unworkable - takes too long.”

The great majority of faculty – 93% - expressed opposition to the new Academic Appeals policy. Of the 125 opposing comments made:

- 67 believed the policy will erode academic standards at Mohawk College
- 21 believed the policy dismisses faculty academic freedom in determining grades and assessments
- 19 believed the policy will lead to more unpaid faculty work
- 18 believed that the policy was about increasing revenues for the College
- 7 believed that the policy was unfair to students who can't afford the \$75 payment

One comment summed up much of what faculty find problematic about the new policy:

“Grade inflation is a troublesome trend in post-secondary education, as is the relentless erosion of the rights of faculty to manage the classroom. The two are not unrelated. There is managerial pressure to recruit and retain. Thus we are asked to accept higher numbers of under-prepared students, on the one hand, while being asked to pass more students on the other. We are to do this in when remediation is being stripped away, and struggling students are placed in a course that is equivalent to the one for people who CAN read and write. The impossibility should be apparent to all, and the increased likelihood of marks in the 40s should be no surprise, either. This appeals policy is another nail in the coffin of actual student success, if we mean success to be competence. The policy may result in increased retention rates, but it does nothing real and honest for students.

The better approach is assisting students to actually gain the skills they need and to avoid setting them up for failure in the first place. Giving a 45% student automatic access to make-up work after the semester cannot hope to improve students' skills in a substantial way, and it teaches students little about personal responsibility for his or her own success over the course of the semester. Further, the new policy expects little from faculty and staff in terms of early intervention, a known factor in student success. By the time a student gets a 45 in my class, he or she has been given every opportunity, and likely

more than one personal invitation, to meet me for help, to redo a quiz, to use his/her accommodations, to use an extension, and so on. If a student misses an assignment early in the semester and asks to make it up, my response is, "Attend, do all remaining assignments, show me that you're playing ball. If, at the end of the semester, you have done that, I will give you that make-up opportunity." By the time the semester is over, students have already had all the "benefit-of-the-doubt" marks I am prepared to give.

As a professional educator, I am skilled at developing evaluations that measure a student's ability to demonstrate, reliably, the learning outcomes of a course. I am not so foolish as to believe that I am perfect, but I account for that throughout the semester. I also think long and hard, as do most of my colleagues, about final grades in the high 40s. I will not pass a student who does not have the skills, even with a 47 or 48. If I haven't moved it to a 50, that's a conscious decision about what would benefit the student most. I grant incompletes if the student's circumstances and near-acquisition of course skills suggest that I should. The new policy suggests that faculty are not capable of making these decisions, and that infuriates me. Clearly, those making the decisions won't have to do all the extra work developing and assessing extra assignments after a semester's worth of assessments have already been done. Finally, this policy suggests to students that 45 is the new 50 (as if 50 being the new 60 weren't enough). Stop lowering the bar! Instead, help students, earlier in the process, to reach it."

Next Steps

Your Local has raised concerns about the proposed policy with Management at our Union College Committee (UCC), so what faculty think of this latest misadventure will not come as a surprise to the College. However, we believe that, since the College chose to keep faculty in the dark until the last minute about what they were doing, it was incumbent on us to give you the opportunity to express your opinion on a policy that will have a significant impact on faculty, students and the reputation of Mohawk College. We will continue to 'encourage' the College to rescind what we believe is an ill-conceived policy that will harm the reputation of our students as they enter the job market, as well as the reputation of Mohawk as a college of choice.

Thank you for participating in our survey!