

Grading policy draws critics' ire

By PAMELA HAMILTON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Benedict College policy that guarantees freshmen a passing grade if they invest effort into classes is drawing criticism from higher education officials and has caused two professors to lose their jobs. But the college president says it gives disadvantaged students a chance at success.

Two years ago, the college implemented a unique policy that requires professors to award freshmen 60 percent of their grades based on how much effort they put into class. The Success Equals Effort policy assigns sophomores 50 percent of their grade based on effort but is dropped for juniors and seniors. Effort is defined by individual faculty members and can include measures such as attendance and completion of assignments.

Higher education officials say the policy is unlike any other in the country, because it is campus wide and leaves little wiggle room for faculty, who traditionally are responsible for determining grade requirements.

At least two professors who refused to follow the policy have been fired and are considering legal action against the college. The American Association of University Professors has criticized the firings.

College president, David Swinton, says the policy gives incoming freshmen, who may not

"I can't think of any example in my own long experience of student in effect receiving passing grades for having just shown up."

CLARA LOVETT
PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

be equipped for college, a chance to succeed instead of turning them out of school. Some students who come to Benedict, a private, historically black college with open enrollment, are unprepared for the discipline and study that earning a college degree requires, Swinton said.

Many of those students are likely to drop out before earning a degree at Benedict, where Swinton said the graduation rate is about 30 percent.

"Unfortunately for African-American students graduating from S.C. public schools, they aren't doing very well in terms of preparation coming into college," Swinton said. "These are the kids you're working with, kids who have the 800s, the 829s" on the SAT college entrance exam.

"When they come to us with these deficits, we have to teach them how to study, teach them how to make efforts, teach them how to believe in themselves, believe that their work matters, they can make a difference in their own lives

RHA debates 2 amendments

By JACOB DAVIS
THE GAMECOCK

The RHA Senate kicked off the semester Tuesday night by debating two amendments, including one that would take away the voting privileges of affiliates and executive members and change the quorum size.

Hark, whose vote would be removed by the legislation, said he agreed with the bill and that it was needed to ensure that the RHA Senate maintained control of its organization.

The quorum change came in response to situations in recent years when "people stopped showing up, and we just could not conduct business," Hark said. Sen. Mark Labryere introduced both amendments.

Adam Pennett of Carolina TV, as well as representatives from Carolina Student Judicial Council and NCC expressed concern that the amendment would unfairly limit affiliates ability to participate in a body of which they were a part.

"Affiliates are not on

campus. They can go to their senators if they have an issue they need discussed, it is not necessary that they have a vote," Labryere said.

Second-year law student Travis Jenkins, representing Columbia Hall, said he thinks the affiliates should have the right to speak, but not to vote.

"That is our job, we do our job, they do theirs," Jenkins said.

Hark said RHA encourages debate and different ideas.

"We don't want people in here just rubber stamping things," he said.

Fifty-nine representatives from 19 dorms were present for the meeting, the first of the semester.

Hark said he wanted to see even greater attendance.

"Not to be negative, because this is the first meeting, but we want more people. Obviously we had some weather that wasn't in our favor tonight," Hark said.

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through their own efforts," Swinton said. "These policies are designed to do that."

Professors commonly award a portion of student grades based on factors other than academic

performance, such as attendance or timely completion of assignments, said Clara Lovett, president of the American Association for Higher Education. But, she said, it's not such a large part of the grade.

■ BLATT

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offender, but Grabski couldn't confirm them. Brewer said he's confident the situation is under control.

Meanwhile, the string of incidents has left some students questioning the effectiveness of security measures at the aging P.E. center. The Blatt is open to USC students, faculty and staff members and their family members. While Campus Recreation installed a card reader at the P.E. center's front desk over the summer as an added security measure, people often walk past employees there without showing identification.

■ HAZING

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authority to harm others. I am in full support of this resolution," she said.

University policy already states that "No organization, registered or otherwise, officially or in fact, may participate in the activity of hazing." It also states, "Registered organizations and groups shall be permitted certain initiation ceremonies and activities, which when examined by the ordinary University student, would seem reasonable under the circumstances and justified in view of the purpose for which they are conducted." However, it also makes clear that this is not intended as a defense for hazing.

Holt said he was glad he had the opportunity to present the legislation. "I was proud to

Beth Fallon, a post-doctoral student, works full-time at the Blatt and uses the locker room about three times a week. She said she hasn't heard anything about a peeping Tom in the showers and added that she hasn't seen any warnings posted or heard any announcements about the incidents or the police investigation.

Gabrielle Massey, a third-year biology student, was lifting weights at the P.E. center Thursday evening. She said she'd heard nothing about a peeping Tom in the locker room.

"I think they should forewarn the women about it," she said.

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sponsor the Anti-Hazing bill because it fosters a spirit of unity and respect on our campus. By joining with the fraternity and sorority councils, the Student Senate has promoted the notion that respecting others is an important part of being a Carolinian.

The Senate voted unanimously to pass this resolution and in doing so has made it clear that hazing as stated in university policy is not appropriate at the University of South Carolina," he said.

"The brotherhood of Sigma Phi Epsilon thinks it useless to tear down a person in order to make him a better brother, and we have purged the practice from our ranks," said Joe Tirpack, a member of Sigma Epsilon.

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■ Q&A

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not caused abandonment of any programs.

Pastides used an inquiry into plans for attracting graduate students to emphasize goals of performing better research and augmenting faculty members by promising new members to boost USC's reputation. Sorensen explained grants provided roughly \$150 million last year. Panel members agreed that a closer combination of faculty research and graduate students' career goals benefits both the university and its students.

"Every student should have the opportunity presented amply and liberally to do scholarship and research," Sorensen said.

Ebert answered concerns that graduate assistant positions were declining by pointing to the Graduate School Research Assistantship program, which supplements the budgets of applicant department that are unable to fully fund these student positions.

A member of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity asked how USC would improve minority enrollment. In addition to Sorensen's list of tactics like satellite university classes taught by professors at high schools around the state, Becker

mentioned recruiting minority faculty members that would aid morale and, coincidentally, retention among the minority students.

Several international graduate students also voiced their concerns. One woman complained that fluctuations in tuition, health care and other costs make it difficult for international students of limited means to accurately estimate the total cost of their education.


Another student proposed that the four-year graduate assistant positions, which waive many fees, rarely cover the time needed to finish a doctoral program. Students who take too long sometimes cannot afford to finish degrees.

Sorensen expressed his disappointment in the nationwide, anti-foreigner sentiments that play a part in the problem of uncertain costs, but supported the four-year restriction for allowing greater numbers into the positions and pushing students to work harder and finish sooner.

Questions concerning specific fees or practices will be answered in a posted on GSA Web site today and in an e-mail sent to the graduate student mailing list.

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