

UNH FACULTY SENATE  
MOTION # XVII-M8

on changing the grade or status of a student

1. Motion presenter: Michael Ferber
2. Date of Faculty Senate discussion: 1/28/2013 and 2/11/2013
3. Rationale:

It has apparently happened very seldom at UNH that the administration has intervened to change the grade or status of a student, with or without informing the instructor. Only one recent example has come to our notice, a case where several students in a UNHM course were allowed, well past the withdrawal deadline, to change their status to "audit" in order not to damage their GPA. The professor was informed and objected to the change. We have not been asked to rule on this case, which no doubt has many complications, so we will only note that the administrators who overruled the instructor assume the burden of making a strong justification for their interference. And we point out that the difference between a grade and a status is vague, if only because a change in status may affect a student's GPA, as it did in this case.

To change the grade or the status against the instructor's wishes is always a very serious matter. (It is perhaps less serious in the case of a teaching assistant, even if he or she is the instructor of record, since TAs are in some respects apprentices learning their profession.) We understand that US courts have ruled that an instructor may not be compelled to change a grade/status but that the university or college administration may change it nonetheless. This is a subtle distinction, to put it mildly. We grant that on rare occasions administrators representing the university as a legal entity may be justified in overruling an instructor. When they do so, it must be made known to the instructor, who has the right to appeal to the Academic Standards and Advising Committee and, if not satisfied, to the provost, and made known to the chair of the senate's Academic Affairs Committee. But we make the following motion in order to make the procedure explicit.

4. Motion:

Before the administration changes a grade or status of a student in a course without the concurrence of the instructor, an explanation must be given in writing to the instructor, or to the department chair if the instructor cannot be reached, and to the chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. The instructor has the right to appeal to the Academic Standards and Advising Committee and, if not satisfied, to the provost.

5. Senate action: passed unanimously.

6. Senate chair's signature: 

Forwarded to: President Mark Huddleston, on, 2-26-2013

Forwarded to: Provost John Aber, on 2/26/2013

Forwarded to: Neil Vroman, Chair of the Academic Standards and Advising Committee, on 2-26-2013