

Point/Counterpoint

Do CoB Students have the *Right* to Drop Courses WP/WF?

Carter's Point

At the CoB's 31-Aug-07 faculty meeting, Interim Dean Alvin Williams led a discussion of USM's (course) drop policy. Williams stated that the CoB would follow USM's policy, which allows student to drop courses through the last week of classes. During that discussion, EFIB Chairman George Carter explained that the word "drop" had been used throughout the discussion as a "generic term." According to Carter, up until the official drop date, *it's the student's choice* to drop a course. Carter pointed that, after the University's drop date, students dropping courses are assigned either a "WF" (withdraw failing) or a "WP" (withdraw passing). Carter then went on to say that *CoB faculty have the choice* to refuse to sign the student's drop form. According to Carter, "the reason there is a signature mark [on the drop form] is you [CoB faculty] *do* have that choice [to withhold one's signature]." This statement indicates Carter's belief that CoB students do not have a right to drop a course after the "drop date."

Carter's statement was backed up by Gwen Pate, the CoB's Director of Undergraduate Programs. Like Carter, Pate stated that individual CoB professors have the *choice* not to sign the form altogether. Pate explained that, by not signing the form, USM officials could not process the form, and the student would remain in one's class. Among those CoB faculty in attendance, instructors Patty Munn and Dolly Loyd seemed most interested in putting Carter's idea, that students do not have a right to drop, into practice.

Doty's Counterpoint

During the discussion about students' ability to drop a course, and in response to statements suggesting that individual faculty have a choice to refuse to sign a student's drop form, former CoB Dean Harold Doty interjected with "I don't believe that's true . . . We cannot keep them from dropping the class." According to Doty, if a student presents a faculty member with a drop form (through the last week of classes), the professor in question must assign either a "WP" or a "WF."

Doty's belief was seconded by management professor David Duhon, who pointed out that USM faculty must accommodate a student's wish to drop a course up through the last week of classes, with only *faculty choice* being whether to assign a "WP" or a "WF." In response to Carter's statement about the reason for the existence of a "signature mark [on the drop form]," Duhon pointed out that, on behalf of the student's wish to drop the course, USM officials would act on any unsigned form. In other words, one way or another USM would accommodate a student's wish to drop a course, at least through the last week of classes. (One CoB faculty in attendance suggested that any unsigned form would likely result in a "WP" designation).

Williams ended the debate on the issue by indicating that he (Williams) would seek clarification and get back to CoB faculty on the matter. Stay tuned for the results of Williams' inquiry.
