

Date: 11 December 2015

To: Undergraduate Council

From: Office of Academic Initiatives and Student Success

*Drafted By:* Joshua Steele, Associate Director, Online Student Success

*Proposed By:* Joshua Steele and Vincent J Del Casino Jr, Vice Provost, Digital Learning and Student Engagement/Associate Vice President, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

RE: Readmission Policies of Peer Institutions for Previously Dismissed Students

What follows is a proposal for a new readmission policy designed to provide educational opportunities to previous students who may have struggled with the transition from high school to college. Below you will find proposed policy language (pp. 1-2) an executive summary of the proposal (pp. 2-3), a review of the current readmission policy for students in poor academic standing (pp. 3-4), a peer review of existing policies amongst The University of Arizona's ABOR peer institutions (pp. 5-8), and additional clarification points presented as follow up questions (pp. 9-10).

## **I. Proposed Policy Language**

### **The Clean Slate Readmission Program 12/11/2015**

#### **Policy Summary**

An undergraduate student seeking readmission to The University of Arizona after an extended absence of at least three years may be eligible to apply to The University of Arizona's "Clean Slate" program. Students may apply for review at the time that they apply for readmission to the University. If this happens, clean slate review takes place in the academic college housing the student's program of study. If accepted to the University, students are also accepted into the Clean Slate program.

Once the standards of the clean slate program are met, previous coursework taken at The University of Arizona will be marked with a designation indicating that they are not contributing to the student's institutional GPA; coursework in which a C or better was earned will still be allowed to meet degree requirements.

#### **Policy Procedures**

To qualify for the Clean Slate program, the following conditions must be met:

1. The student is pursuing readmission into an Undergraduate degree program

2. At the time the request is filed, a minimum of three years shall have elapsed since the most recent University of Arizona coursework was attempted
3. The student must complete 12 credits or more in the twelve months following the three plus year absence with a minimum grade-point average of 2.500 on all work completed in that interval

Students may apply to be a part of the Clean Slate Program prior to readmission (including as a requirement by the respective college for conditional readmission) and up to the first day of class of the first term of readmission. Recalculation of the GPA will occur after the student completes 12 credits within the specified time period, provided that those credits are completed within twelve months.

If the student satisfies the conditions for Clean Slate, the Office of the Registrar will annotate the student's permanent record that the policy was enacted. Once granted, coursework completed prior to the extended absence will be designated as not contributing to the GPA; courses in which a C or better was earned can count towards degree completion requirements (grades below a C will not meet degree requirements).

Once Clean Slate is granted, a readmitted student must meet respective requirements for the degree program as well as the University, including both college and university residency requirements.

While Clean Slate will allow for the GPA to be reset, grades from previous enrollment will continue to be reflected as part of the academic record on the student's transcript, ensuring a true and accurate academic history.

Academic petitions requesting a shortening of the required three-year absence for Clean Slate will not be reviewed, nor be granted. Students with absences shorter than three years may still apply for readmission.

Clean Slate may be effected only once during a student's academic career and is not available to students who have completed requirements for a bachelor's degree. Once Clean Slate is enacted, it is permanent.

## **II. Executive Summary**

UA Online, in addition to extending The University of Arizona's reach to attract new students, provides an opportunity for previously enrolled students who were unable to finish their undergraduate program to resume their pursuit of a diploma. A student may have been unable to complete a degree program due to a myriad of factors, including life circumstances or changes, difficulty adapting to life in college, lack of maturity or preparation out of high school, or any other variety of reasons.

Current UA readmission and academic renewal policy is practical regarding ensuring readmitted students have the mathematical ability to meet GPA expectations, however it does not allow flexibility to fully consider the impact that

time and maturing perspective can have on a student's ability to be successful in a university setting. In particular, the requirement that a student complete 30 hours in residence before becoming eligible for Academic Renewal is onerous for part-time students who were not in good standing when they left the UA, making return to another institution as a transfer student a more favorable option perhaps than a return to UA. Fellow ABOR institutions and other peers have policies for academic renewal that allow students to make a fresh academic start more immediately upon readmission.

### **III. University of Arizona Readmission Process and Academic Renewal Policy**

The current readmission policy allows for students who left UA in good academic standing to be automatically readmitted. Students who left while on probation or disqualified from the University due to the inability to meet Grade Point Average requirements must apply to the college they seek to reenter and colleges determine at their discretion whether or not the student is admissible. Various factors may play into this decision, including:

- feedback from the student addressing previous performance and plans to remedy;
- coursework completed at other institutions since leaving UA; and,
- calculation of student's 'B-deficit,' or the number of B grades the student needs to earn to bring their UA GPA to an acceptable level

A student with a very high B-deficit (low GPA) may not be readmitted to the University as it is deemed that there is a seemingly insurmountable hurdle to the student meeting acceptable academic requirements.

If a student is readmitted, our Academic Renewal policy would allow the student, if five or more years have elapsed since they completed previous UA coursework and they have earned at least 30 units at the UA with a 2.5 GPA, to exclude up to four semesters of course work, completed within a 24 month period, from their GPA calculation in regard to academic standing, GPA and eligibility for graduation. If a student selects this option, all coursework completed during the defined period will be disregarded for all purposes, including coursework with an acceptable grade. To complete degree requirements that normally would have been fulfilled by this acceptable coursework, students must repeat the course, complete other applicable coursework or demonstrate proficiency in the case of Foundations courses, according to the policy. <http://catalog.arizona.edu/2011-12/policies/acadrenw.htm>

### **IV. Discussion of Current Readmission and Academic Renewal Limitations**

While the current readmission process is practical regarding ensuring readmitted students have the mathematical ability to meet GPA expectations, it fails to address the impact that time and maturing perspective can have on a student's ability to be

successful in a university setting. A student who attended the Main Campus ten years ago and was unsuccessful has had many life experiences since that time. This means that given a chance to return they may have a very different result, due to increased maturity, more clearly defined goals, or familial obligations. While a letter from the student may reflect this resolve to improve upon previous performance, the B-deficit review is blind to the power of such resolve, making it difficult for a college to realistically readmit the student.

A student in this scenario may be recommended to attend a different institution (typically a community college) and earn 24 credits to demonstrate satisfactory proof of academic improvement in the intervening time period. This request may not be feasible for some students, for either of the following reasons:

- a student may have a number of completed credits (through previous transfer or completed at UA) that would make taking an additional 24 credits at a community college inadvisable; and/or,
- other schools (including community colleges) may not provide the flexibility needed for many adult learners; re-entering into UA Online with the associated flexibility, support and resources may have a higher likelihood of success than enrolling into traditional courses at a community college with limited online courses/capabilities

Currently, the respective colleges within UA are handicapped in recognizing special circumstances, as readmitting a student who has a limited realistic opportunity to remove probationary status can in turn be a disservice to the student. In scenarios in which a student admitted in spite of a high B- deficit, the student faces an upward climb, placing additional pressures on the student to immediately excel to improve their GPA to avoid a second dismissal.

In particular, online students, who tend to take on only 6 to 9 credit hours of coursework within a term, face a hurdle in becoming eligible for UA's current Academic Renewal process in that it could take them 3-4 semesters, or more, to earn the 30 units at UA required to be eligible to expunge unacceptable coursework from their GPA calculation. Students in this situation would find it easier to attend a different 4-year institution, such as ASU, and transfer their acceptable coursework than return to the UA.

In response to this challenge, AISS, under Joshua Steele's leadership, conducted a review of the ABOR University of Arizona peer institutions to determine if their respective readmission and academic renewal policies include provisions recognizing the impact that extended time away from the institution could provide, as well as the reconciliation of GPA issues in readmitting students who faced severe obstacles during previous attendance.

## **V. Review of peer institutions**

The readmission policies of the 15 ABOR peer institutions of The University of Arizona were reviewed to determine if policies exist within this group to reconcile the recognition of a lengthy academic hiatus to the realistic mathematical ability to raise a GPA to an acceptable level. In addition, the two other public, 4-year institutions in the state of Arizona were also reviewed. Of the 17 institutions, seven have policies in place to provision the removal of low grades from GPA calculation if the student had been out of attendance for an extended period of time (to note, not every school has policies available in an easily searchable format; the ten schools where a policy was not located may have similar provisions that were not able to be found). Each policy varied on which grades were removed and on whether previously passed courses would still apply towards degree requirements. Here forward, a policy with this provision will be entitled a “renewal policy.” Below is a chart of the 17 institutions, as well as:

- if a renewal policy could be found;
- title of renewal program, if applicable;
- length of time period required to qualify for renewal;
- completed credits required for eligibility; and,
- notes, including GPA impact.

Institution	Policy Yes/No	Program Title	Min Time Elapsed	Resident Credit hours required for eligibility	Effect on GPA/Grad Requirements
<a href="#">University of Arizona</a>	Yes	Academic Renewal	5 years	30 units earned at 2.5 GPA or higher required prior to academic renewal	Disregard up to 4 semesters of all coursework for all purposes (GPA calc, grad requirements)
<a href="#">Arizona State University</a>	Yes	Academic Renewal	5 years	Resident credit hours for graduation must be completed after academic renewal; student must complete minimum of 12 credits with no grade lower than a C, within three semesters after academic renewal	Previous grades of C or better are treated as 'transfer' courses in recalculated GPA; other courses excluded from GPA calculation; no more than 60 pre-renewal units count toward degree
<a href="#">Northern Arizona University</a>	Yes	Academic Renewal	3 years	Must enroll in and receive a grade in at least one NAU course before applying; fulfill graduation residency requirements after renewal granted.	Disregard up to 4 semesters of all coursework for all purposes (GPA calc, grad requirements)
Univ California- Davis	No	N/A	N/A		N/A
Univ California Los Angeles	No	N/A	N/A		N/A
<a href="#">Univ of Florida</a>	Yes	Fresh Start	5 years	Must apply upon readmission	GPA reset to zero, prev C or better counts for grad rqmts
Univ Illinois-Champaign	No	N/A	N/A		N/A
<a href="#">Univ Iowa</a>	Yes	ReStart	4 years	Eligible upon readmission	All courses in selected semesters disregarded from GPA calc and graduation requirements (no credit)

<a href="#">Univ Maryland- College Park</a>	Yes	Academic Clemency	5 years	Must be filed in first semester of return to University; applies for those in good standing or not	Up to 16 credits, not term limited, removed from GPA and grad requirements
Michigan State Univ	No	N/A	N/A		N/A
Univ Minnesota-Twin Cities	No	N/A	N/A		N/A
Univ North Carolina- Chapel Hill	No*	N/A	None		DQ-ed students are recommended to take courses in online campus
<a href="#">Ohio State Univ</a>	Yes	Fresh Start	5 years	Graduation residency requirements must be met after renewal	GPA reset to zero, prev C- or better counts for grad rqmts
<a href="#">Pennsylvania State Univ</a>	Yes	Academic Renewal	4 years	Eligible upon readmission	GPA reset to zero, prev C or better counts for grad rqmts
Texas A&M Univ	No**	N/A	N/A		References Texas Fresh Start policy
<a href="#">Univ Texas- Austin</a>	Fresh Start	N/A	10 years	Eligible upon readmission after time has lapsed	No courses more than 10 years prior will count for GPA or grad requirements; more recent courses may be accepted as transfer credit
Univ Wisconsin- Madison	No	N/A	N/A		N/A

It's important to note that many of the universities whom have policies regarding removing negative GPA points in place are notable leaders amongst public institutions with respect to online and distance learning, notably Pennsylvania State University, Ohio State University, The University of Maryland, and The University of Florida.

## **VI. Summary**

Our fellow ABOR institutions and several peer institutions acknowledge that coursework taken in excess of four years prior may not be a predictor of future student success and offer returning students a path to a fresh start from their first semester as a readmitted student.

As UA Online continues to attract previous students who may have faced challenges, a policy that helps address the GPA and B deficit challenge can help college personnel review a student's candidacy for readmission qualitatively, recognizing instances of personal growth, rather than the logistics of GPA management, and offer students an opportunity to elect to return to UA versus another four year institution. As the University of Arizona seeks to improve access to quality degree programs, a close look at the renewal policy options may aid in improving access for readmits who face steep challenges in GPA recovery due to previous coursework.

## **VII. Policy Proposal for Adoption**

In looking towards our ABOR peers, renewal policies are comprised of the following enactment options:

- entire term(s) removal;
- select courses chosen to be removed form GPA;
- GPA entirely reset, previous coursework applicable; and/or
- GPA entirely reset, previous coursework not applicable to degree requirements.

The most common of these include the student's GPA being absolved while still allowing previous successfully completed coursework to meet respective degree requirements (University of Florida, Pennsylvania State University, Ohio State University, Arizona State University). Crafting a policy to mirror this group will allow The University of Arizona to readmit students who present compelling cases that their previous struggles at the University are not reflective of their future capabilities, and provides opportunity to the target population: students with high B deficits and limited success due to the challenges of adjusting to college life and academics with renewed perspective due to intervening life experiences.

The University's current academic renewal policy does not adequately provide admission access to those seeking a second chance at earning their Undergraduate

degree; as such the Clean Slate proposal was created to better serve this population of students.

### **VIII: Follow up Questions**

To begin, some general questions regarding the origin of this policy review designed to provide a backdrop to the overarching request.

What is the significance of the Clean Slate name?

“Clean Slate” is a clear and marketable policy name that can resonate with prospective readmits and staff to reflect the ability to have a “fresh start” with respect to GPA, allowing those students who may previously not been recommended for readmission a conditional second chance at earning a degree from The University of Arizona.

What is the relationship between the Clean Slate policy and the Academic Renewal policy?

Under this proposal, the Academic Renewal policy would be altered and rewritten and renamed as “Clean Slate.” The current Academic Renewal policy does not align with the majority of our peers, particularly those with undergraduate online degree programs.

Why is Clean Slate conditional to a student completing 12 credits within a set timeframe?

While some ABOR peer institutions offer immediate renewal/GPA adjustment, the proposed policy for The University of Arizona would require a student to complete 12 credits prior to a GPA recalculation. This provides incentive for a student to continue to pursue their program at UA, while ensuring that GPA recalculation only occurs for students who have demonstrable evidence of improved academic performance.

Where does the proposed policy fit with respect to our peer institutions?

The policy proposal was created to sit between the more lenient and restrictive existing policies of our peers. Lenient policies include allowing a complete GPA reset without adjusting previously completed coursework; more restrictive policies involve either entire term removal or treating all previous institutional credit as equal to community college credit, reducing the amount of transfer credits that could be used by the student.

If a student cannot have their GPA recalculated prior to completing 12 credits, why would they apply for “Clean Slate” prior to that condition being met?

Probationary or Disqualified students may have large B deficits that make it prohibitive for them to be a candidate for readmission. A college can require students in this situation apply for Clean Slate as part of the readmission process to ensure that GPA recalculation is applied once the appropriate credit requirement is met.

If a student applies for Clean Slate upon readmission and is approved by the college, what are the next steps? How does that information get to the registrar?

The knowledge that a student has applied for Clean Slate may have an impact on future candidacy of the student to progress. The college is encouraged to track students who have applied and at the end of each regular term (Spring, Fall) review Clean Slate applicants as part of their normal review of probation students to identify those who have satisfied the credit requirement. Once a student has satisfied the credit requirement (12 units), the information can be presented to the Registrar so that the appropriate designations are made on the transcript and the GPA recalculated.