

To: CUNY Chancellor, Felix V. Matos Rodriguez  
CUNY University Provost, Daniel E. Lemons  
CUNY University Registrar, Vivek Upadhyay  
Board of Trustees Committee on Academic Programs and Policies (CAPPR)  
Chair of the University Faculty Senate, Martin Burke

Subject: The May 22, 2021, Policy & Procedure Memorandum from the University Registrar (<https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/registrar/resources/CUNY-Uniform-Grade-Glossary-Policies-and-Guidelines-05222021-1.pdf>)

We the undersigned CUNY Faculty Governance Leaders have respect for and honor the shared governance processes as established by the CUNY Board of Trustees and so write to you to express our concern that the issuance of the May 22, 2021, memorandum above did not conform to those processes. In that memorandum, without corresponding prior action by the CUNY Board of Trustees, the University Registrar stipulates in regard to policy changes noted below that “This Policy shall supersede and override all undergraduate and graduate program-level grading change policies currently in effect at CUNY colleges and schools” (see pp.9-10). The policies below concern aspects of the faculty’s primary responsibility for determining whether students have met academic standards meriting a certain grade or their continued enrollment at the college. The CUNY Bylaws assign these responsibilities to a college’s faculty in Article 8.5 and assign policy-making power on these issues to a college’s academic governing body such as a Faculty/Academic Council in Article 8.6. Further, in the resolutions cited in 2.08 Governance of the University in the CUNY Manual of General Policy, the Board also gives campuses autonomy on these issues through its charge that campuses design their own governance plans, subject to its approval. Consistent with our acknowledging the Board and its Bylaws, policies, and processes, we thus respectfully ask that the appropriate authorities in the Chancellery take the following actions with regard to three areas below from the above memorandum:

1. On Grade Appeals:

A. *Retract* the Student Appeal and Grade Appeals Process sections on pp. 8-9. In particular, retract:

i) The timing restrictions on p.8: “Appeals must be filed [by the student] within 30 calendar days of grade assignment in CUNYFirst” and the subsequent stages are to follow 30 days after.

Rationale: The 30-day deadlines would start and/or expire within the January break and the summer annual leave period.

ii) That the ruling of the department or college grade appeals committees be only a recommendation to the faculty member, who 15 days upon the receipt of the recommendation is to inform the Registrar of their “decision to either sustain the grade or submit a grade change.”

Rationale: Making the decision on the appeal only a recommendation to the instructor is inconsistent with a substantive student grade appeal process: it would render the appeal process without force and give students no real recourse from what they see to be faulty decision-making by their instructor. The proposed policy is also inconsistent with powers given to department or college bodies in some campus Governance Charters.

B. *Honor* the decisions made by campuses using their own approved grade appeal processes.

2. On FIN grades:

A. *Retract* on p.8: “An appeal instituted by a member of the faculty to change an administrative FIN must indicate that the work required to resolve the INC grade was in the instructor’s possession prior to the INC deadline date.”

Rationale: This nullifies long-standing policies on some campuses that allow faculty to permit a student to turn in work after the INC deadline. There the opportunity for such extensions has benefitted many students over the years.

B. *Honor* the extensions granted to students beyond the INC deadline, if they are given by faculty according to policy approved by the campus policy-making body on academic matters.

3. On the removal of the 0.00 quality points from the WU (Withdrew Unofficially) so that receipt of a WU does not affect a student’s GPA:

We recognize that this change may be merited given the fact that there are often cases in which students end up with a WU and the application of 0.0 quality points to their GPA may be unfairly punitive. But a campus faculty/academic governance body may legitimately decide that regular, repeated receipt of WUs by a student is not consistent with their being in good academic standing on that campus. Thus, colleges should be able to limit the times a student may receive a WU without effect on standing.

Thus, either *allow campuses to add policies* on how the number of WUs will affect student standing or, if there will be a CUNY-wide policy, *go through the proper academic policy-making process of consultation with campuses and approval of a policy by the CUNY Board of Trustees*.

In sum, our view is that unless the Board of Trustees has decided or will decide that there will be one universal grade appeal process at CUNY, or that a campus faculty cannot provide for a process of granting extensions for students to make up incomplete work prior to graduation, then the relevant existing campus-approved policies stand. Further, we think that the removal of the effect of an unofficial withdrawal on a student’s GPA should be approved by the Board of Trustees and issued along with guidance on how campuses may factor the receipt of WUs into decisions about student standing.

Respectfully,

Bronx Community College: Roni Ben-Nun, Chair, College Senate

Hostos Community College: Ernest Ialongo, Chair, College Senate

Hunter College: Laura Keating, Chair, College Senate

LaGuardia Community College: Christina Bruns, Chair, College Senate

Queensborough Community College: Philip A. Pecorino, Chair, Faculty Executive Committee