December 16, 2005

To: Jon Sticklen  
Chair, Executive Committee of Academic Council

From: Ralph Putnam  
Chair, University Committee on Academic Policy

Subject: Maximum course load policy

On 15 December 2005 UCAP discussed ECAC’s request to consider the following issue submitted by Professor Weber:

I request that UCAP consider the apparent lack of a policy regarding maximum course loads in the summer term. My understanding is that the University has a policy limiting students to a maximum of 20 credits in a given term, subject to some exceptions. Based on my communications with the Registrar’s office, below, it appears that no attempt is being made to enforce that policy in the summer. The reason given for that failure is that “The policy is silent regarding summer.” I think the policy needs to be made explicitly applicable to the summer term with the expectation that proportionate adjustments will be made to cover the various fractional term courses that are offered, particularly in the summer. Obviously, given the complexity of summer term scheduling, there probably should be an override mechanism tied to this policy. Letting students overload themselves diminishes the value of their education, sets them up for failure and to some degree interferes with the education of the students in the class carrying normal loads.

We examined the following sections of the Academic Programs Catalog:

- Semester Credit Load  
  (http://www.reg.msu.edu/read/UCC/Updated/undgredcreditload.pdf)
- Attendance  
  (http://www.reg.msu.edu/read/UCC/Updated/attendance.pdf)
- Code of Teaching Responsibility  
  (http://www.reg.msu.edu/read/UCC/Updated/teaching.pdf)

UCAP concluded that it is the responsibility of course instructors to specify and enforce attendance policies and requirements for the completion of course work and assignments, as indicated in the Code of Teaching Responsibility. Furthermore, the complexity of the summer schedule—with courses offered in many different time blocks and sessions (including online offerings)—makes monitoring student course loads for any particular period of time during the summer impractical.

Cc: Julie Harrison 
Jackie Wright 
June Youatt 
Robin Pline 
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Dick Weber