

Preliminary report re the repayment of federal financial aid for students who receive all F's or W's

Peter Knipp (chair), Michelle Vachris, Nicole Guajardo, Jana Adamitis, Virginia Purtle, Lisa Duncan Raines

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PROBLEM:

Presently, if all of a financial-aid student's grades are F's or W's for a particular semester, *and* if instructors have no easy mechanism to communicate the fact that the student stopped attending his/her class, then the feds will assume that the student "effectively" withdrew from classes halfway (ie, 50% of the way) through the semester. It turns out that students are required to repay aid (which is deemed "unearned aid") if they complete less than *sixty* percent of the semester. Hence, such a case (ie, a financial-aid student with all F's and W's) would require CNU to pay \$\$\$ to the feds. It is the *student* who is obligated to repay the feds, but the fact of the matter is that CNU pays the feds and then strives to get the \$\$\$ from the students (ie, putting a "hold" on registration, transcripts, etc), a task which is labor intensive.

GOAL:

We do not want to give \$\$\$ back to the feds if the student actually DID earn this aid, ie if they participated academically beyond the 60% date in at least one of their classes.

(proposed) SOLUTION:

CNU will introduce a grade of "UI" (unauthorized incomplete), whose meaning is probably self-explanatory. For all purposes *except* for the handling of financial aid, a UI will be equivalent to an F. (Note that many instructors give an "I" to a student who really did NOT receive authorization to get an incomplete; the instructor simply did not feel like giving an F.) We will now be able to assert to the feds that an F means an "earned" F, ie a grade that is only awarded if a student continues in the class for the duration of the semester. After the introduction of the UI, it is anticipated that the number of "problem students" (ie, financial-aid students who receive all W's and UI's) will be considerably smaller than the number of problem students (ie, financial-aid students who receive all W's and F's) prior to this policy change, thereby leading to a decrease in labor performed by CNU staff, including Financial Aid officers. CNU will ask each problem student to provide evidence of "academic participation" (e.g., graded assignment, test, or letter from their instructor which attests to a last date of attendance) in at least one of their classes, beyond the

60% date. The burden of proof will lie with the student. IF the student can provide this evidence, then CNU will assert to the feds that the student earned their financial aid. If the student *cannot* provide this evidence, then CNU will pay this \$\$\$ to the feds and will strive to extract reimbursement from the student. It is anticipated that this sum of \$\$\$ will be considerably less than the \$50K which CNU repayed to the feds during the last academic year.