

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

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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 federal government 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 do not complete more than *sixty* percent of the semester in any of their classes. (Note that the 60% date happens to coincide with the last day in the semester that a student may withdraw or elect the pass/fail option.) Hence, the presence of such a "problem student" (ie, a financial-aid student with all F's and W's) would require CNU to pay money to the government. It is the *student* who is obligated to repay the government, but the fact of the matter is that CNU pays the government and then strives to get the money from the students (ie, putting a "hold" on registration, transcripts, etc), a task which is labor intensive and often without success.

GOAL:

We do not want to give money back to the government 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), which will be defined in the catalog to ...

"indicate that a student did not participate academically in a course beyond the 60% date in the semester; this is computed in the cumulative GPA in the same manner as an F."

Instructors will be directed to award the grade of UI in this circumstance; whereas the grade of F shall be awarded to a student only if the student participated academically after the 60% date (but failed the course nonetheless). For all purposes *except* for the handling of financial aid, the effect of a UI upon a student will be equivalent to that of 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 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 (or - at least - beyond the 60% date). After the introduction of the UI, it is anticipated that the number of financial aid students who received all W's and UI's will be considerably smaller than the number of problem students (as defined above) prior to this policy change, thereby leading to a decrease in labor performed by CNU staff, including Financial Aid officers. CNU will continue to pay this money to the government and will strive to extract reimbursement from the student, but it is anticipated that this sum of money will be considerably less than the \$50K which CNU repayed to the government during the last academic year.