

UC 11797 12F

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*Tabled by the UC
for further
discussion
4/24/13.*

Bill Summary:

With this bill, The Student Government Association hopes to instate a Grade Replacement Policy at the University of Houston, as a way to allow freshman to make up for the mistakes of their first 2 semesters, which may in turn raise their GPAs and encourage them to continue forward at the University of Houston.

Parameters of the Bill:

1. This bill is applicable to freshman in their first year enrolled in any higher education.
2. According to this policy, freshman would be able to repeat up to 2 non-major core classes once per class for a complete grade replacement in GPA calculation (original grade will still be shown on transcript)
3. According to the policy, students may only replace grades of D or F, and must repeat the class the next full semester in which it is offered.

LABEL: UB48007

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DRAFT: Third

University Bill to Reinstate a Grade Replacement Policy for the University of Houston Students

Whereas, most University of Houston students, hereafter referred to as Students, strive to do well in their academic endeavors, especially while pursuing their undergraduate degrees, and;

Whereas, it is in the best interest of the University of Houston to pursue academic policies that help the University of Houston to do well in the Students' academic endeavors, especially in order to preserve the University of Houston recognition as a Tier One Research University as recognized by the Carnegie Research Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and;

Whereas, a vital element of achieving and preserving Tier One status is through the University's retention and graduation rates, and;

Whereas, many students make their choice to leave or remain at the University based upon their success or failure in the first two semesters of their college career, and;

Whereas, when Students do not do well or ultimately fail their courses, their cumulative Grade Point Average is decreased, therefore lowering their likelihood of staying enrolled in school, and;

Whereas, currently, Students are allowed to repeat courses to do better, and improve their cumulative Grade Point Averages, which are added as a separate item from and along with the original course, and;

Whereas, many universities offer some form of grade replacement policy, including universities within both the state of Texas and the University of Houston System, and;

BE IT ENACTED BY THE SENATE OF THE 48TH STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON THAT:

Section 1: The University of Houston shall provide and implement a Grade Replacement Policy for the Students.

Section 2: The purpose of the Grade Replacement Policy shall be to provide Students, who choose to repeat courses to improve their grades, the opportunity to have their repeat courses' grades replace their original course grade in the computation of their Grade Point Average.

Section 3: Students shall be able to utilize the Grade Replacement Policy beginning the 2012-2013 Academic school year.

Section 4: The Grade Replacement Policy shall have the following guidelines:

Clause 1: The Grade Replacement Policy shall establish a system of grade replacement at the University of Houston.

Clause 2: Grade replacement shall be available only for courses in which the Student previously received a grade of a D or F.

Clause 3: Undergraduate students are only permitted to replace grades in core classes which have been taken in their first two (2) semesters as an undergraduate of any university and do not apply to their major.

- a. Courses taken outside these first two (2) semesters may be retaken, but not with the Grade Replacement Policy.
- b. Courses being retaken must be retaken during the next long semester in which the course is offered.
- c. Courses must be retaken at the University of Houston in order to qualify for the Grade Replacement Policy.

Clause 4: Students shall be able to use the Grade Replacement Policy up to two (2) times while pursuing their undergraduate degrees.

- a. Students shall be limited to using the Grade Replacement Policy only once per course they elected to repeat.
- b. Any subsequent repeats of the same course after the first repeat shall invalidate the R grading on that course and all attempts shall then be used in the computation of their Grade Point Average.

Clause 5: When the Grade Replacement has been processed and carried out, Students' original grades shall still be on their academic transcript, but they shall not be used in computation of the Students' Grade Point Average.

Clause 6: When the Grade Replacement has been processed and carried out, Students' original credit hours shall continue to be used in determining whether

Students have maintained Satisfactory Academic Progress and in regards to the Enrollment Cap of Texas Residents

Section 6: The University of Houston Student Government Association shall resolve in support of adding the Grade Replacement Policy to the University of Houston Student Handbook.

Reasons for this Bill:

1) *This bill will increase university retention rates:*

- As it stands, UH 6 year graduation rates are at 41%. This means only 41% of students are staying at UH for their full degree, even when given 2 extra years. Similar schools, such as UT, A&M, Texas Tech, and UNT all have higher rates, even with similar median SAT scores and similar amounts of financial aid given. All these schools (except UT) have some form of grade replacement, etc. (source: http://www.utexas.edu/news/attach/2011/campus/analysis_efficiency.pdf)
 - Texas Tech: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/registrar/pages.aspx?page=gradeReplacement>
 - Texas A&M: <http://registrar.tamu.edu/Current/GradeExPolicy.aspx>
 - UNT: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/academic-record.html>
 - UT Dallas: <http://www.utdallas.edu/student/catalog/ugcurrent/policies/academic.html>
 - Texas Woman's: <http://www.twu.edu/undergraduate-studies/repeating-courses.asp>
 - UHD: <http://www.sugarland.uh.edu/PDF/grades-uhd.pdf>
- Studies, such as that done at Syracuse University, shows that a student's first year in college is incredibly important to his decision whether or not to stay in school. (source: <http://faculty.soe.syr.edu/vtinto/Files/Taking%20Student%20Retention%20Seriously.pdf>)
- If freshman are given a chance to improve their first year, there is more likelihood of them staying at UH.
- While it is easy to say this will "lower the value of our degree," it is not a quantifiable argument. Retention rates, however, are directly linked to the consideration to Tier One status, which is directly linked to degree value.

2) *"The Freshman Mentality"*

- Freshman year is by far the hardest year, with a lot of adjustment. (source, <http://firstyear.uindy.edu/parent/adjustment.php>)
- Many people say there are already policies in place such as the W system, however, they do not take into account the mindset of freshman, who believe that given a month they can pull a grade from an F to a passing grade, as they did in high school. (note that on previous website, issues with grades come up at every step, and in October, one is specifically "questioning whether to drop classes")
- Freshman are coming from high school, where there are reminders about homework, projects, etc, and more excuses are given

- Professors at the University are dissimilar to high school teachers, and especially in the case of freshman classes, are often hard to reach, busy with other endeavors, and only have so many hours in which to help a large number of students.
- Freshman do not understand how to work with such a teacher, or the means by which they may go about getting help, even from a teacher who is willing to, or through auxiliary tutoring services. I mentor honors freshman, and even many of them do not understand these services
- Freshman experience a lot of mental growth and "growing up" within their first year of college, during which they often put school as a second priority (source: <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08246/908705-298.stm>)
- To see more on the freshman mentalities, see:
https://www.noellewitz.com/documents/shared/Papers_and_Research/2011/2011NationalFreshmanAttitudesReport.pdf

3) *We're not making excuses*

- Nowhere in this bill does it say that anyone wants to hand out free A's. The student must earn a second grade just as he would have earned the first.
- The student must take the class by the next time it is given for this to count. This means that they have not been given too much time to take higher-level classes and completely understand the material, they must learn it all the same.
- This is only for non-major classes, which students typically do more poorly in to begin with. Therefore, we are not allowing students to graduate without learning the material they must.
- The University of Houston at Manoa did similar research and found that "grade inflation is providing a higher grade than a student deserves. Replacing a poor grade with the latter, higher grade reflects the student's actual mastery of the course content, and is, in fact, the grade that the student deserves"
(source: http://www.hawaii.edu/uhmfs/documents/2010_11/20110504_motion_gradereplacementpolicyreport.pdf)

4) *Other schools have similar policies:*

- As much as I would like to say other schools don't matter, they do. They are our competition.
- See above for other, similar policies.
- The University of Hawaii at Manoa has done very similar research, much of which can be seen here:

http://manoa.hawaii.edu/ovcaa/academics/caa/PDFs/CAPPmotion_RepeatPolicy.pdf