



SHARED GOVERNANCE COUNCIL (SGC) RECOMMENDATION FORM

Please submit to: Presidents-Office@stcc.edu

“Formally endorsed by Trustees, the Shared Governance Council (SGC) will serve as a high level advisory body to the STCC President on the recommendations developed by the College community that are then submitted to the Board of Trustees. The body will operate on a consensus mode rather than voting. The President will present to the Board of Trustees recommendations via consensus by the SGC with his/hers/their view as to what action the Trustees should take.”

Additional Detail/ ACCT Consultant Report (June 2022):

“Proposals may come to the SGC from any constituent group via written request.”

“The SGC considers fiscal, union, student, administrative impact of the proposal.”

“The President decides to accept, modify or reject the proposal if it is an administrative procedural matter; the President decides to recommend to the Board of Trustees any policy recommendation accompanying it with a statement of support or concern.”

This form is to be used for generating recommendations for shared governance consideration that potentially lead to changes in policy and/or practice-protocols. For an overview of topics to be considered by the STCC Shared Governance Council, please confer with your appropriate representative. The comprehensive consultant report prepared for the college (June 2022) is readily available, and a public-facing website is currently in development that will ensure information, and the availability of agendas, minutes, and decision/actions.



I: Proposed Recommendation

[The following section is to be completed by the body bringing forward the recommendation]

Name of Entity Making Recommendation:

Geraldine de Berly, Ph.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs

● **Nature of the Recommendation:**

Academic

Student Success/Systems of Operation

Budget/Fiscal

Health-Safety-Security (Students, Employees, Campus)

Technology/Innovation

Facilities

Other: _____

● **Describe current policy/ protocol/ challenge:**

The STCC Withdrawal Policy allows for the withdrawal of a student for excessive absences. Our current policy is not consistent with other MA community colleges and none of the CT community colleges. Historically, this was added to the policy for two major reasons.

The first reason was administrative in that it allowed for return of Title IV funds. Essentially, if a student does not attend 60% of the semester, any federal funds that have been awarded are prorated for the amount of time that the student did attend. If the student remains in the course for over 60% of the duration of the course, the student aid is not prorated.

The second reason was to protect students that walked away from receiving a failing grade on the transcript which had a negative impact on the student GPA.

From an administrative perspective, the Return of Funds can be handled at various times throughout the semester. If a student has a failing grade at midterm and has not attended



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since the fifth week of classes, the student receives a W at midterm (WM) and Return of Funds is calculated based on that date. As a student initiates a withdrawal, the date is recorded and Return of Funds can be calculated. If a student fails the term, faculty report the Last Date of Attendance (LDA) and the Return of (Title IV) Funds will be calculated from this date.

While the intent of this policy was student-centric, the outcomes have not been as positive.

Equity: BIPOC Students Disproportionately Affected

The Excessive Absence Withdrawal negatively impacts BIPOC students at a far higher rate than their counterparts. The chart below depicts the use of the Withdrawal at Midterm (WM) and the Excessive Absence Withdrawal (WU). Based on the demographic make up at STCC, one would expect that the effect of a policy would mirror the STCC demographic make up. For example, if 42% of students at STCC identify as White, one might expect 42% of those affected to be White. In the case of the WU, that is not the case. While 42% of STCC students are White, only 26% of all withdrawals were awarded to White students. In this case, there was a differential of 16 lower than the expected outcome. Conversely, while STCC is approximately 30% Hispanic, over 36% of all withdrawals due to excessive absences were assigned to this group. We notice a higher number of the WU awarded to Black, Hispanic, Two or More Races, and the Unknown group. While it was likely not the intent, the current practice harms BIPOC students at an exceedingly high rate. This policy is not consistent with STCC’s goals regarding equity and anti-racism.

Faculty Initiated Withdrawals Affect BIPOC Students Disproportionately

WC Total		357	Withdrawal per Midterm (LDA)		
WM	American Indian	5	0.29%	0.00%	0.288
	Asian	38	2.19%	4.00%	-1.815
	Black or African American	226	13.00%	13.00%	-0.004
	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	0.17%	0.00%	0.173
	Hispanic	695	39.97%	30.00%	9.965
	Two or More Races	56	3.22%	3.00%	0.220
	Unknown	216	12.42%	8.00%	4.421
	White	500	28.75%	42.00%	-13.248
WM Total		1739	Withdrawal Excessive Absence		
WU	American Indian	8	0.37%	0.00%	0.367
	Asian	48	2.20%	4.00%	-1.799
	Black or African American	366	16.78%	13.00%	3.781
	Hispanic	793	36.36%	30.00%	6.359
	Two or More Races	99	4.54%	3.00%	1.539
	Unknown	301	13.80%	8.00%	5.801
	White	566	25.95%	42.00%	-16.049
WU Total		2181			

Table 1- Depicts the distribution of withdrawal grades that were initiated by the instructor and the race/ethnicity of the students awarded those grades.



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Student-Centered: Continued Access and Financial Implications

One of STCC's Core Values is Student-Centered as noted on the [website](#).

Student-Centered: We encourage our students to be the best that they can be. We provide a diverse educational experience that promotes personal and professional growth.

Part of being student-centered is allowing students to make the decisions that are best for them while guiding them. The current policy fails to allow students to make the ultimate decision in their education. Students are not at the center of the decision making process that allows the student to continue attending a class in which the student has satisfied a financial obligation. When a student is withdrawn from a course, the student is no longer allowed to attend that course. Without due process, the student is removed and no longer has access for which the student has made financial arrangements. We have students who are aware they are likely to have to repeat the course; nevertheless, continuing to attend class or have access to lectures would be of benefit when repeating the course. Consequently, students should have the option, or more strongly put, *the right to remain* in the course even though a failing grade seems likely.

Oftentimes, the student has not attained the threshold required for the Return of Funds (60% of the course) and the student ends with an unexpected balance. In most of these cases, the students that acquire a balance are Pell Grant students. For these students who are low income, leaving them with a balance requires them to find funds that they might not have in order to return to STCC in subsequent semesters. (If that obligation is not met, their tax returns are intercepted after approximately two years.)

Inconsistent Implementation: Use of Excessive Absence Withdrawal is Confusing and Not Transparent

Our current Excessive Absence Withdrawal policy is not applied consistently from one subject area to another and, even less so, from one faculty member to another. General Education (e.g., Math, English, etc.) faculty tend to issue Excessive Absence Withdrawals heavily whereas program (i.e., discipline specific) level faculty use them less frequently. Adding to the inconsistent use, some faculty within an area do not use Excessive Absence Withdrawals and others use them heavily. This leads to student confusion. Students are removed from some classes with little or no warning while being allowed to continue in other classes for the same level of attendance/participation. Cases exist when students that have received a WU in one course, have stopped attending all courses and then have a mixture of failing grades and withdrawal grades on their transcript when they stopped attending on the same day. Again, this may have unforeseen financial consequences.

Describe recommended policy/protocol change, and the benefit/impact:

General Information regarding withdrawing from a course

- Beginning Fall 2023, STCC will change its Withdrawal Policy
- STCC will no longer use the Excessive Absence Withdrawal.
- **STCC recognizes and values academic freedom-** Instructors develop their own course policies and these may include grade reduction for absences/lack of participation that may lead to a course failing grade.
- *Students wishing to withdraw from course(s) have the responsibility to initiate the process as faculty will no longer issue withdrawals.* Notifying the instructor or ceasing to attend class does NOT constitute official withdrawal. Failure to officially withdraw may result in an “F” grade.
- **Withdrawing From Courses:** After the course drop period, students have the right to withdraw from one, several, or all courses through the last day to withdraw as published in the academic calendar (e.g., the twelfth (12th) week of the fall or spring semester). Withdrawals will not be processed after the last day to withdraw, unless there are extenuating circumstances for which the student must meet with the Academic Dean that oversees the course that the student is attempting to withdraw from.
- For students who withdraw by the withdrawal deadline, a “W” will be recorded on the transcript and will count as a course attempt, but will not be factored into the GPA calculation.
- If a student receives a failing grade (F) at midterm and has not attended class since the fifth week of a standard semester, the student will be administratively withdrawn (WM) from the course and a Return of Title IV funds may apply.

Procedure to Withdraw

- By the withdrawal deadline, students must withdraw from the course in ARIES. Students needing assistance should contact registrar@stcc.edu.
- Depending on the reason for withdrawal, various offices from STCC will reach out to the student to ensure that this is the right decision. ¹

¹ *The SGC should note **Addendum A** as an example of the triage that will occur when a student opts to withdraw from a course. This ensures that the student is making the most informed decision and allows an opportunity to retain the student.



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Describe background and rationale for how the recommendation was generated (involvement of staff-faculty-students-governance bodies), include any supporting data, reports, survey results, research, et al.:

- As the withdrawal policy was developed, the following shareholders were able to provide input:
 - The Anti-Racism and Inclusion Alliance
 - The Recruitment, Registration, and Recruitment group
 - The All Unit Congress Academic Affairs Standing Committee
 - Faculty at various levels
 - The Academic Leadership Team
- Presentations were given on the withdrawal data and stakeholder voices were crafted into the recommendation



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Date submitted:

II: Recommendation Review

Shared Governance Council Review and Consideration (Date):

Generated Consensus (minutes made available):

Next Steps (as needed):

III: Presidential Action

Decision on the Recommendation:

Rationale/Summary:

Date of Presentation to STCC Trustees:

(Signature)

(Date)

Addendum A: Example of Student Outreach by Withdrawal Reason

Withdrawal Code	Withdrawal Reason	Prevention Step	Intervening Stakeholders	Potential Interventions
1	Transfer to Another College	N/A	Registrar, Transfer Counselor	Exit Interview- Save the credit and finish
3	Moving	N/A	Registrar	Save online courses
4	Medical	Highlight Health Services	Health Services/Student Affairs Office	Medical Reentry, Work with faculty if possible
5	Academic Problems	Create Academic Supports Link in Blackboard, Greater use of Early Alert System, Blackboard Retention Tools	SUCCESS Coaches, MILE, LEAD, TRIO, Faculty of the course section	Develop a model to work with students to self-advocate and determine if they really must withdraw
6	Wrong Major	Clearer distinction in programs, shared courses the first semester in like programs where possible, greater clarity in the application, verified schedules by advisors when students self-register	Division Deans, Department Chairs	Course substitution if possible, alternative major such as LTGS
7	Faculty/Staff Problem	N/A	Division Deans	Outreach to student
8	Financial Aid	Financial aid documents in Spanish, Clearer process to increase aid if needed	Student Financial Services Supervisor, CAS, Foundation	Increase aid, help student with financial issues
9	Personal	N/A	Advisor, CAS	Exit Interview- Suggest student specific intervention
10	Family	Your Family is Our Family support page. Family orientation for Hispanic families?	Advisor, CAS	Exit Interview- Suggest student specific intervention
11	Military	N/A	Veteran Affairs	Support student in the transition
12	Childcare	Add an offer to assist with childcare vouchers to Aid letter of Pell students (CAS)	CAS, Early Childhood Education Program Student Liaisons	Assist students in completing application for state assistance and pair with Childcare provider that meets the student needs
13	Transportation	Increase Bus Pass Awareness	Transportation Office, CAS	Allow students to exchange parking pass for bus pass, provide students with emergency assistance
14	Employment	N/A	SUCCESS Coach, CAS	Exit Interview- Save the credit where it can be (online, etc.), work with faculty
17	Other	N/A	SUCCESS Coach	Exit Interview- Suggest student specific intervention
WC	Administrative Withdrawal	N/A	N/A	N/A
WM	Withdrawal at Midterm	Greater use of Early Alert System, Message to faculty after week four to intervene with students not attending/participating	SUCCESS Coach, Advisors	Develop a model to work with students to self-advocate and determine if they can be readmitted if successful completion is still a possibility
WU	Excessive Absence Withdrawal	Greater use of Early Alert System, Message to faculty after week two, four and ten to intervene with students not attending/participating	SUCCESS Coach, Advisors	Develop a model to work with students to self-advocate and determine if they can be readmitted if successful completion is still a possibility
Additional Codes or Edits	Suggested New Withdrawal Reason	Prevention Step	Intervening Stakeholders	Potential Interventions
XX	Lack of Housing	Highlight one function of CAS each week in Student Affairs Newsletter/STCCler	CAS	Assist with Housing Needs
XX	Unable to Acquire Books and Materials	Highlight one function of CAS each week in Student Affairs Newsletter/STCCler	CAS, Foundation, Student Financial Services	Access funding sources for students
XX	Lack of Technology	Digital Equity Program in Orientation, Create Blackboard link to Digital Equity Program in Blackboard	CAS, Library, Foundation, List of Open Computer Labs	Access funding sources for students or loaner devices

Withdrawal Interventions

- Similar to a triage tree
- When a specific withdrawal is initiated by a student outreach by various offices will begin
- Stakeholders with intervene to attempt to “save” the student
- Goal is increased student retention

AUC Academic Standing Committee
Withdrawal Policy Decision

The Academic Standing Committee has voted to move forward with the proposed Withdrawal Policy. After careful review and discussion, the committee notes the following reasons for supporting the proposal:

- The policy addresses an important need for students to feel empowered in their education.
- It is not uncommon for students to be faced with significant financial burden as the result of being withdrawn. In addition, withdrawals can cause students to have to wait to apply to certain programs or can even cause them to be unable to return in future semesters. This policy will ensure that they are not responsible for the non-academic consequences that a withdrawal can create.
- This change in policy will align us with the current practices of the other Massachusetts community colleges.

While the committee has voted to move forward with the proposal, the following concerns were noted:

- Many students will not initiate a withdrawal on their own, even when it is in their best interest, which could have potential implications in certain programs.
- Some members of the committee noted a concern that students who choose not to withdraw even after being told they will not pass the course could become disruptive/distracting due to no longer having any stake in the course. Additionally, this could cause problems with interactive components of the course (i.e., labs and group projects).

The committee would like to suggest that the following point be considered during the implementation phase of the policy:

- Construct and provide students with a flow chart that they can review prior to initiating a withdrawal so they fully understand their options, resources and any implications of the withdrawal.