

June 15, 2011

NON-CONTINUING STUDENT ACCESS to UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS

Executive Summary: The Non-Continuing Student Access Task Force recommends that the University allow non-continuing students to have full access and availability to instructional systems for two semesters/major terms after non-continuing status is recorded. For the purposes of these recommendations, major terms include fall, spring, and summer. This recommendation will go into effect starting at the end of the Fall 2012 semester.

Context and Background:

In June of 2010, the Executive Council of WCU approved a revised version of Policy 95: Data Network Security and Access Control in response to several audit findings (<http://www.wcu.edu/25378.asp>). The policy was further updated and approved in March of 2011. The policy is designed to limit access to university systems to those who have a documented relationship with the institution. Because of the principles upheld by this policy, the division of IT implemented a revised access control policy for non-continuing students, including those students (graduate and undergraduate) who do not enroll in continuous semesters, withdraw, are dismissed, or graduate.

As part of that policy revision, IT instituted a semi-automated system to have non-continuing student access discontinued. The access was set to discontinue prior to the beginning of the following academic period. In the Fall of 2010, no problems were reported but because of the short time frame between the end of the Spring 2011 term and the start of the 2011 mini-mester term, non-continuing student access to systems, including the LMS (Blackboard) was discontinued the Sunday following graduation. This proved to be problematic for students who needed continued access to course material and/or grades as well as for faculty, for whom the records of these students were no longer visible/available. There are many different reasons for needing access to course material following non-continuation. These include, but are not limited to, disciplinary-based accreditation, grade disputes, incompletes, multi-semester projects, and course-based research.

Recognizing the issue, the Academic Governance department of IT called together a committee of stakeholders in order to discuss a revised policy that would take into consideration academic, administrative, financial, and other factors in order to determine a fair, workable, cost-effective and learning-centered approach to non-continuing student access. The committee included Craig Fowler (CIO), Larry Hammer (Registrar), Laura Cruz (CFC Director), Kathleen Brennan (Associate Dean, Graduate School), Nory Prochaska (Chair, eBriefcase), Chris Baxley (Systems Administrator, Blackboard), Anna McFadden (IT Director/Governance) and Stan Hammer (IT Director/Applications). Their recommendations follow below.

Recommendations:

The Non-Continuing Student Access task force makes the following recommendations:

- Non-continuing students will have access to their courses (from the previous three semesters) in the LMS (currently Blackboard 9.1) **for two academic terms** after non-continuing status is recorded. Academic terms are defined as fall, spring, and summer.

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- Current continuing instructors will have access to student information hosted in the LMS **for two academic terms** after non-continuing status is recorded for that student.
- Non-continuing students will be also able to access non-course specific areas of the LMS, notably the eBriefcase/Portfolio module **for two academic terms** after non-continuing status is recorded.
- Non-continuing students will have access to course material housed in iTunes University, WCU's Wordpress site, Qualtrics survey tool, and WCU's wiki/blog servers **for two academic terms** after non-continuing status is recorded.
- These policies will apply equally to undergraduate and graduate students at WCU.
- The technical and administrative processes for designating students as non-continuing and identifying these terms in Banner will be developed collaboratively by the IT and the Registrar's office, effective Fall of 2012.
- Access will be terminated the working day following the end of the second major term/semester. Under exceptional circumstances, access may be terminated at an earlier date, subject to approval of the appropriate University administrators.
- The policy covers access to IT systems with academic content (as listed above). Access to other systems, such as wireless, computer labs, and software downloads, is not included. For a complete list of IT systems and their termination policies, see matrix below.

Rationale:

- By keeping a standard time period across the instructional systems, IT will be in a better position to efficiently manage the access process for non-continuing students.
- Two academic terms was deemed sufficient time to meet most academic needs without unduly impinging upon licensing, hosting, storage or other costs and storage space. This could also be done while still upholding the security principles outlined in Policy 95.
- This policy corresponds with University readmission policies regarding active/inactive student status
- The policy applies equally to undergraduate and graduate students, thereby not privileging one over the other or requiring further manual processes to differentiate between the two groups.
- The policy applies to non-continuing students only. Policies for continuing students and non-continuing faculty (see policy 95 for further information) remain the same. Continuing faculty will continue to have access to Blackboard courses for three academic terms prior to the current term.

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