

Date: May 1, 2009

To: University Senate

From: Enrollment Management Committee

Re: Revisions to Fresh Start Program to Allow

**Introduction:** At the behest of the Director of Admissions, the Enrollment Management Committee (“Committee”) reviewed the current WCSU Fresh Start Program . Based on that review, the Committee recommends that the University make two changes to its current policy. First, that the “one-year-rule”, described hereafter, apply only to courses taken at WCSU. Second, that the Director of Admissions be granted the authority to waive the one-year-rule for students who have demonstrated a threshold level of academic progress at another institution during their absence from WCSU.

**Current Policy:** WCSU’s current Fresh Start Policy, which can be found in the 2008-2010 WCSU Undergraduate Catalogue, p. 19, allows a previously matriculated student who left WCSU with a GPA of less than 2.0 to be readmitted. Upon readmission, the student’s GPA will not reflect previously earned grades lower than a “C”. The purpose of the program is to allow students who initially struggled academically to have a second chance at graduating with a GPA unaffected by the below average grades of their initial enrollment.

To be eligible to re-admit under Fresh Start:

- a. The period of withdrawal or suspension and readmission must include at least one year in which no college courses were taken. Remedial non-credit college courses in English and Mathematics are excepted. (*Hereinafter, this provision will be referred to as “the one-year-rule”*).
- b. Completion of no more than 60 credits with a C- or higher average when applying for re-admission.
- c. Satisfactory completion of WRT 098: Written Communication, and/or MAT 098, Elementary Algebra, if appropriate.
- d. Significant evidence of personal growth since withdrawal, in the form of two letters of recommendation. A student may be conditionally admitted to the university under this policy, resulting in restrictions in the number and nature of courses taken during the first semester of enrollment.
- e. A personal interview may be required.

For purposes of Fresh Start, courses for which the student received a grade of “F” do not count in the computation of the 60 credit maximum, described in b. above. Upon re-admission, the student will not receive credit for a failed course, nor will the failing grade factored into the student’s new GPA. If a student received a grade between “D-” and “C-”, inclusive, then that course will be included in determining the 60 credit maximum. However, upon re-admission the student will not receive credit for

the course, nor will the grade be factored into the student's new GPA. Finally, If a student earned a grade of 'C' or better in a course, then that course will be counted in determining the 60 credit maximum, the student will receive credit for the course and the grade will be factored into the student's new GPA.

**PROPOSED CHANGE: THAT THE ONE YEAR RULE APPLY ONLY TO COURSES TAKEN AT WCSU**

**Problem With The Current Policy:** If a student leaves WCSU, then that student will not be eligible for the Fresh Start program unless the student did not take any college credit courses for at least a one year period during the period of his/her withdraw.

For example, after her first academic year at WCSU, 2007/2008, Wendy Wakeup, a matriculated student, withdraws from the university. She had earned 24 credits at Western and had a GPA of 1.5 (she received four "D"s and four "C"s). The following academic year, 2008/2009, Wendy enrolls in Housatonic Community College. There, she earns 30 credits with an overall GPA of 3.8 for the year. In the Fall 2009, Wendy attempts to reapply to WCSU under the Fresh Start program. She is not eligible because her period of withdraw does not include "at least one year during which no college courses were taken". Thus, if Sally is readmitted to WCSU in Fall 2009, her old "D" grades will be factored into her overall GPA. In this case, to be eligible for Fresh Start Wendy would have to take a year off from education altogether and then re-apply to WCSU after Fall 2010. If she re-enrolls outside of Fresh Start, then her previous "D"s will be factored into her cumulative GPA. Thus, assuming all her courses from HCC transferred, she would begin her re-admission with 54 credits and a 1.5 GPA.

Contrast Wendy's situation with that of Douglas Vagabond. After his first academic year at WCSU, 2007/2008, Doug, also a matriculated student, withdraws from the university. He too earned 24 credits at WCSU with a GPA of 1.5, having received four "D"s and four "C"s. Doug decides to take time off from school to make money and mature. He spends a year working as a bartender and scuba-diving instructor at a Caribbean resort. In the Fall 2009, Doug reapplies to WCSU under Fresh Start. Since his period of withdraw includes "at least one year during which no college courses were taken" he qualifies provided the other criteria are satisfied. If admitted under Fresh Start, Doug re-enters WCSU with 12 credits (for the courses in which he received a C) and a 2.0 GPA. He does not receive any credit for courses in which he received a "D", and the "D" grades are not factored into his new GPA.

With limited exception for remedial math and English courses, the current policy requires students to refrain from **all** college pursuits during their period of withdrawal from WCSU. The effect of this rule is to punish students who seek to improve themselves academically during the withdrawal period, while at the same time rewarding their counterparts who did not seek to so improve themselves. Thus, the current policy discourages academic development. Indeed, the WCSU Admission's Office has recently seen cases where students were denied entry into the Fresh Start Program because they did not satisfy the one-year-rule, despite having shown evidence of significant personal and academic growth at another institution during their absence from WCSU.

**Proposed Change:** Change the wording of “Condition a.” to read as follows:

“The period of withdrawal or suspension and readmission must include at least one year in which no college courses were taken at Western Connecticut State University. Remedial non-credit college courses in English and Mathematics are excepted.”

(Underscored language is the proposed change)

The proposed change would still mandate the student to take at least a one year leave from WCSU in order to grow and mature (unless waived by the Admissions Director pursuant to the second proposed change, discussed *infra*). However, it does not discourage overall academic growth during the withdrawal period.

**PROPOSED CHANGE: GRANT THE DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS DISCRETION TO WAIVE THE ONE-YEAR-RULE UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES**

**Problem With The Current Policy:** As currently written, the Admission’s Office has no discretion to waive the one-year-rule, even in cases where a student presents evidence of significant academic growth and development during his/her withdraw from WCSU.

**Proposed Change:** Add the following language to the end of “Condition a.”:

“The Director of Admissions may waive this condition, provided that during the period of withdraw or suspension and readmission the applicant has (1) taken at least 12 credit hours of courses at another institution which are transferable to WCSU, and (2) earned a grade of “B” or better with respect to each such course taken. Nothing herein shall be interpreted in a manner that would require the Director of Admissions to waive the condition. “