

Restrictive Majors Policy

Date Proposed: March 14, 1991

Date Approved by CAPC: March 14, 1991

Date Approved by Provost: August 2, 1991

Brief Background

West Chester University requires an overall grade point average of 2.0 for a student to be in “good standing” and for graduation. No university requirement specifies a grade in an individual course that is higher than a 2.0.

Policy

Effective with the Provost’s approval, departments or programs which can justify selectivity in students that is greater than university qualifications may do so only by specifying minimum grades in specific cognate, prerequisite, or majors course, and/or a GPA in specific set of major, cognate, ad/or prerequisite courses, for each student in the major regardless of whether the student enters the program as a freshman, or transfers into it from another institution or program, or declares it for the first time. The courses and grade specifications must be stated in the university catalog.

Immediately following approval, the Provost shall notify departments which in the past have been granted selective admissions criteria based on overall GPA that those criteria or requirements will be removed in May, 1992.

Implementation considerations:

Some selective criteria used in the past will need to be reconstituted under the new specifications. Departments and programs are advised that changes to impact the entering class of fall, 1993, will need to be approved by CAPC in the fall semester, 1991, to be identified in the 1992 catalog. Submission to CAPC for such approval shall include clear justification for the requirements, such as data which document the relationship between the requirements demanded and student’s academic success in the major. Admissions officers will be guided by the 1992 catalog in their recruitment and admissions decisions concerning the fall 1993 entering students.

It is recognized that departments or programs with existing *selective requirements that are based on the overall GPA* may be using those requirements as a form of enrollment management. If those departments or programs continue to see justification for greater selectivity in their majors, it is suggested that the requirements for the major be reconstituted to a series of specific lower division courses which must be passed with specified minimum grades (or in which a minimum GPA must be

achieved). Organization of majors courses into a more defined prerequisite structure with minimum grades which must be achieved (either in individual courses or in the composite of a set of several courses), accompanied with a stipulation that upper division courses be restricted to "majors Only", should maintain reasonable quality, as well as manageable quantity, in majors courses.

Additional background: The work on this policy began last year, and the 1989-90 work is summarized in a report to the May '91 CAPC. The first three pages of that report which identify some of the injustices and other consequences of existing practices are attached here for background.

April 23, 1990

Position Paper – 1989-90 CAPC Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and Academic Policies (CUUAP)

**Arlene P. Rengert
Chair**

The Problem

The above committee was asked by the Provost to review the increasing tendency for departments to require higher internal transfer requirements than the grade point required by the University for “good standing (2.0)” at the institution, and the implications of this for the University. In 1989 the Provost put approval for selective internal transfer requirements on “hold” pending consideration and action by CAPC. The attached list indicates majors which had received approval for selective internal transfer requirements prior to that time. The reader will notice that on the list of “selective” majors are some of WCU’s most populous majors.

In considering the problem, the CUAAP recognized many related but different dimensions to the situation that is evolving:

- 1) Sitting side by side in WCU classes are students who entered WCU as undeclared majors and who are in good standing with GPA’s of 2.3 or 2.4 but who are unable to enter the major of their choice because it demands a higher GPA for internal transfer, and students who declared that major as entering freshmen, but who never rise about a 2.0 or 2.1 in WCU coursework. This is, quite simply, unfair.
- 2) The streetwise student who desires a “selective” major in some cases can take one or two semesters of low-challenge courses – in theory even using all “elective” spots for classes unrelated to the major in question – and achieve the GPA required for entrance to a “selective” major. Once the student is admitted, apparently, there is no progressive requirement of grade point average that would be consistent with that required to enter the major. Exceptions to this general tendency include Childhood Studies/Reading, which requires a 2.25 for admissions and a 2.5 by 64 credits, and Secondary Education, which in most cases does not have an “entrance” GPA but which requires a 2.56 by the time of student teaching.
- 3) The university offers some 45 majors in its catalog and implies that these are available to students in good standing: in practice, students of acceptable but undistinguished capability may find their choice limited to a set of majors in which they may have little interest (and which may also be incompatible with their talents). Thus, they may be in “good standing” at the University but unable to enter an appropriate field of concentration, and like Charlie on the M.T.A. be unable to exit from the institution.

- 4) Some departments are using selective internal transfer criteria as an enrollment management practice. That is, they have more majors than they have faculty and other resources to educate properly. In the absence of other effective measures, they set admissions standards to control larger numbers than they can accommodate – thereby leading to the inconsistencies identified in #1 above. There is not necessarily any correlation between the stated GPA and the actual demands of the major. These observations are based on interviews with chairs of departments with selective internal transfer criteria (see attached report).
- 5) There is no known correlation between establishment of selective internal transfer GPA's and the difficulty of the major. Among the majors which do not demand GPA's higher than a 2.0 are chemistry, philosophy, psychology, English, biology, history, mathematics, and the foreign languages. It seems improbable that this collection of majors is less demanding of students or require less academic ability than does the set of majors which does have selective internal transfer GPA's (which include Speech Communication, marketing, management, criminal justice, political science, and special education).
- 6) Many of the majors which exclude students with 2.0-2.5 GPA's do not have a curriculum which is structured so as to require beginning courses passed as prerequisites before allowing a student to enter advanced courses. This may be a more academically sensible way of controlling both the numbers and quality of students in the advanced classes.
- 7) Popular campus culture sees the "undeclared major" as a second class student, one of lesser quality who is unable to enter the *major of choice*, rather than as a potentially valuable and capable student who is taking time to identify an appropriate career track. This image was reflected in interviews with some chairs of department of "selective" majors who seemed to regard keep "undeclared" out as a desired goal. The image is not borne out in the GPA's nor in the retention and success of those who are undeclared in their early years. (Undeclared majors who entered WCU in fall of 1988 had a first semester GPA of 2.1, which is similar to the total university GPA for that class of 2.2).
- 8) If departments which have selective requirements for internal transfer also have similarly selective requirements for admission as freshmen, such as is presently taking place for the internal transfer requirements, these latter requirements have not been through a CAPC process that can allow examination of the impact on the institution as a whole. If departments which have selective requirements for internal transfer do not have similarly selective requirements for freshmen admission, the situation described in #1 above is even more serious.