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West Texas A&M University

**Policies and Procedures related to
Senate Bill 1231
Limiting the Number of Course Drops
For Undergraduate Students at
Public Institutions of Higher Education
In Texas**

January 2008

West Texas A&M University TEC 51.907 Policy Statement

Background

The 80th legislature passed SB 1231 in Spring 2007, which added section 51.907 – limitations on number of courses that may be dropped under certain circumstances - to the Texas Education Code. The legislation states that “an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another (public) institution of higher education” in Texas with certain stipulations and exceptions. This document serves to establish the policies and procedures followed by West Texas A&M University for the implementation of this legislation.

Affected Students

Those who enroll as entering freshmen students or first-time-in-college (FTIC) students in undergraduate courses for the first time during the fall 2007 semester or any subsequent semester are subject to course drop limitations.

Exceptions:

- High school students who enroll through dual credit programs, such as the WTAMU Pre-University Program (PUP), are not affected by the 6 drop limit until they graduate from high school and enroll in higher education.
- Transfer students from private or out-of-state institutions who began Fall 2007 begin the drop counter when they first enroll in a Texas public institution. Credits dropped from Fall 2007 until their first enrollment in a Texas public institution are not counted.
- Students returning to school who elect to take advantage of the “Academic Fresh Start” policy for credit earned prior to Fall 2007 are not affected under this legislation.
- Students who graduated from high school and enrolled in higher education prior to Fall 2007, including May/June 2007 high school graduates who began in summer 2007, are not included under these rules.
- Students who have completed a baccalaureate degree at a recognized public or private institution are not affected.

Courses Counted for Drop Limit

Courses counted for the drop limit at WTAMU:

- are dropped after the census date for the term (12th class day for Fall/Spring, 4th class day for summer sessions, and 2nd class day for intersessions).

- have a status of “X” in the student information system and are marked in the grade column with either “X” or “XF” indicating the student dropped the course during the semester.
- include those taken at a non-Texas location or via distance learning.

If a student drops a course that consists of a required lecture and lab, these will be counted as one drop and not as two since enrollment in one requires enrollment in the other.

Linked courses that are a part of a learning community and are intended to be taken at the same time may count as one drop. Drops related to linked courses should first be pre-approved by the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs or his designee.

Courses dropped as an instructor requirement in disciplinary situations will be counted in the 6 drop limit. Students should understand the expectations of classroom behavior as outlined in the Code of Student Life.

Exceptions:

- If a student chooses to withdraw for the term, meaning that he/she drops all courses enrolled for the term, those courses will not be counted in the drop limit. These courses are identified with a status of “W” in the student information system and are marked in the grade column with “X” or “XF”.
- Based upon the recommendation of the Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, developmental coursework will not be included in the drop limits since they are considered pre-college and do not provide undergraduate credit. Policies are already in place which address the drop and/or failure of these courses.

Notation on Official Transcripts

The West Texas A&M University official transcript will include a line at the end of the coursework listings that indicates:

“TEC 51.907 Undergraduate Course Drop Counter: #”

- The # indicates a single digit from zero to six (0-6) to indicate the number of drops at WTAMU ONLY to be counted according to TEC 51.907.
- If a student is exempt from this policy the # is replaced with “X”
- Until the university develops the mechanism to report the number of drops the value is “N”.

Students With 6 Drops

Once an affected student has hit the maximum allowed number of drops – six (6) – he/she will not be allowed to drop additional courses. The student will be required to remain enrolled in the course for the duration of the semester.

Appeal Policy

Students who have already completed 6 drops and students facing extenuating circumstances which require the dropping of courses beyond the control of the student, may file an appeal through the Office of the Registrar.

To appeal the inclusion of a dropped course the student must:

- Complete the “Request to Waive Course Drop Limitation Related to SB 1231” form within 1 week following the drop with the Office of the Registrar. For students having already met the 6 drop maximum and wishing to drop a course, attendance is strongly encouraged until a final ruling is made on the petition.
- Provide sufficient documentation to prove “good cause” for their petition. Examples of possible circumstances could include, severe illness or debilitating condition affecting the student, death of family member or sufficiently close person, call to military duty of student or spouse. Other “good cause” will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

An appeal committee will consist of the Registrar, the Director of the Advising Center, and a Faculty Advising Fellow or their designee.

To appeal a decision of this committee, a student may file a petition with the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs or his designee who will then make the final determination to either uphold or overturn the committee’s decision.

Unknown Transfer Course Drops

In the case where a student is a new transfer student and all transcripts have not yet been received from previous institutions, he/she will not be permitted to drop courses until either the official transcripts are received or an unofficial copy of the transcript is on file.

If a student does not report a prior enrollment and it is discovered later, a hold will be put on the student’s records to stop all drops until the transcripts from the prior enrollment are on file. This hold also prevents registration for future semesters.

If a transcript is received from another Texas public institution that has not completed the implementation process of reporting the drops on their transcripts, the Admissions Office will make a determination of whether the student is impacted by the legislation and document in the student information system an estimate of the number of drops on the transcript from the sending institution. In the case of a student challenge of this process, the Registrar will contact the sending institution to discuss a “true” drop count.

Transient Students

Transient students, students who enroll temporarily with the intent of returning to their home institution the next semester, are not required to provide transcripts from all institutions attended. Only the most recent transcript is submitted to the Admissions Office. With this in mind, these students will only be monitored for their drops completed at West Texas A&M University.

Outcomes

The intent of this legislation is to improve the time-to-degree for students in public institutions of higher education in Texas. With that in mind, West Texas A&M University expects the following outcomes:

- Change in the mindset of students. Students will enroll in courses each term with the goal of completing all courses as opposed to the mindset of enrolling in 15 hours in anticipation of dropping a course if necessary and remaining full time status.
- Shortened time-to-degree. Students will make academic progress in a much more timely manner which brings them closer to graduation within the traditional time frame of 4 years.
- Reduction in loss of funding for repeat courses. Students who take coursework seriously and complete courses the first time will reduce the number of students facing the three-peat legislation and paying higher tuition rates as a result. It will also reduce the number of students faced with the limitations on excessive semester credit hours (45/30-hour rule) and paying out-of-state tuition rates.