

Good Academic Standing Task Force

Summary Report

On September 4, 2015, President Max Burns charged the Good Academic Standing Task Force with reviewing Gordon State's current tiered Academic Standing policy, investigating whether it is still appropriate for a school that has State College ranking, and recommending possible changes to the current policy (if any) to better serve our students and the college.

The Task Force was headed by Mr. Peter Higgins and Dr. Steve Raynie and included eight members split evenly between staff and faculty.

Staff:

Mr. Brad Almand, Recreation Coordinator

Ms. Tonya Coleman, Director of Residence Life

Ms. Kristi Hayes, Assistant Registrar

Mr. James Woodruff, Academic Success Advisor, Student Success Center

Faculty:

Dr. Peter Boltz, Professor of Communications

Dr. Erick McCarthy, Assistant Professor of English

Mr. Tim Vick, Assistant Professor of Business and Information Technology

Dr. Brian Webb, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Activity:

After the initial September 4 meeting, the Task Force met also on September 21 and October 26. In between meetings, members conducted research on a variety of issues, including but not limited to the following:

- A thorough review of the Academic Standing Policies of 12 other USG institutions, including both peer and aspirational institutions;
- A thorough review of the interventions and consequences used by those other USG institutions to foster the success of students who fall below “Good Standing”;
- Research into intrusive advising practices and student interventions in general;
- More specific research into academic contracts as an intervention.

During the September 21 meeting, Britt Lifsey, Institutional Research Manager, assisted the Task Force by running through several “what if” scenarios to illustrate the impact of various changes to the existing policy on student enrollment.

Recommendations:

After conducting its research and discussing the findings, the Task Force came to the following recommendations:

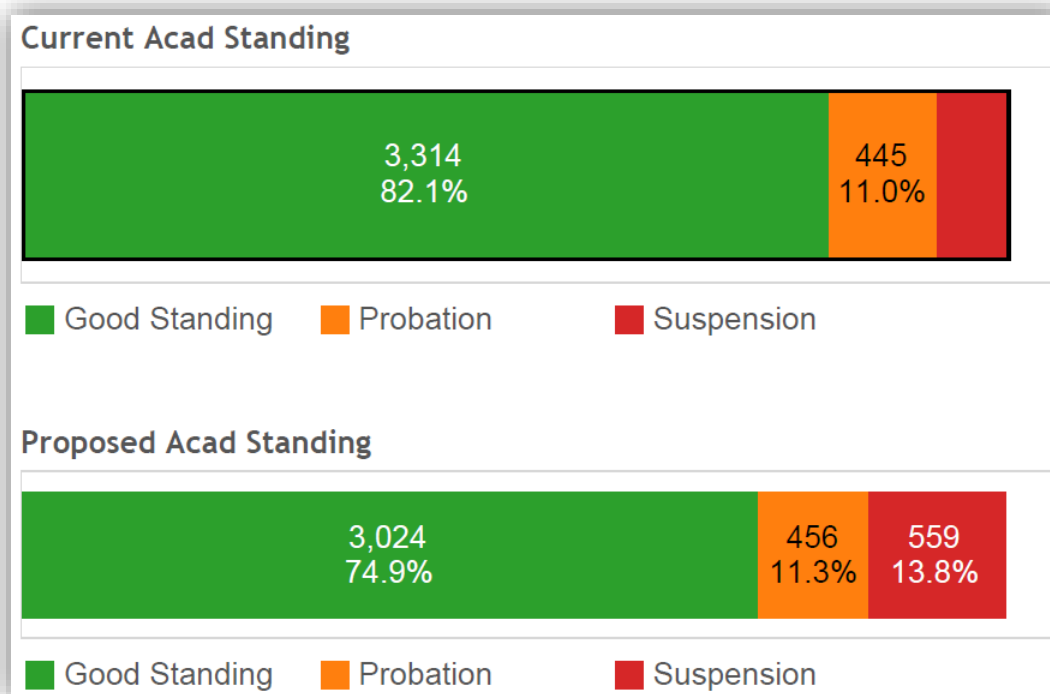
1. Unanimously agreed that Good Academic Standing be raised to a cumulative 2.0 GPA or better for all students, replacing the current tiered system based on number of attempted credit hours
2. By majority, agreed that students with a cumulative GPA below 1.5 be placed on academic suspension
3. Unanimously agreed that the first academic suspension should consist of one full semester (Spring/Fall)
4. Unanimously agreed that the second academic suspension should consist of two full semesters (Spring /Fall)

5. Unanimously agreed that the third academic suspension should consist of three full semesters (Spring /Fall)
6. Unanimously agreed that the fourth academic suspension should result in expulsion from the College.

Impact:

The Task Force carefully considered the possible impact upon enrollment of the recommended 2.0/1.5 changes. Britt Lifsey generated a report using Fall 2014 enrollment data (see table below). The impact can be summarized as follows:

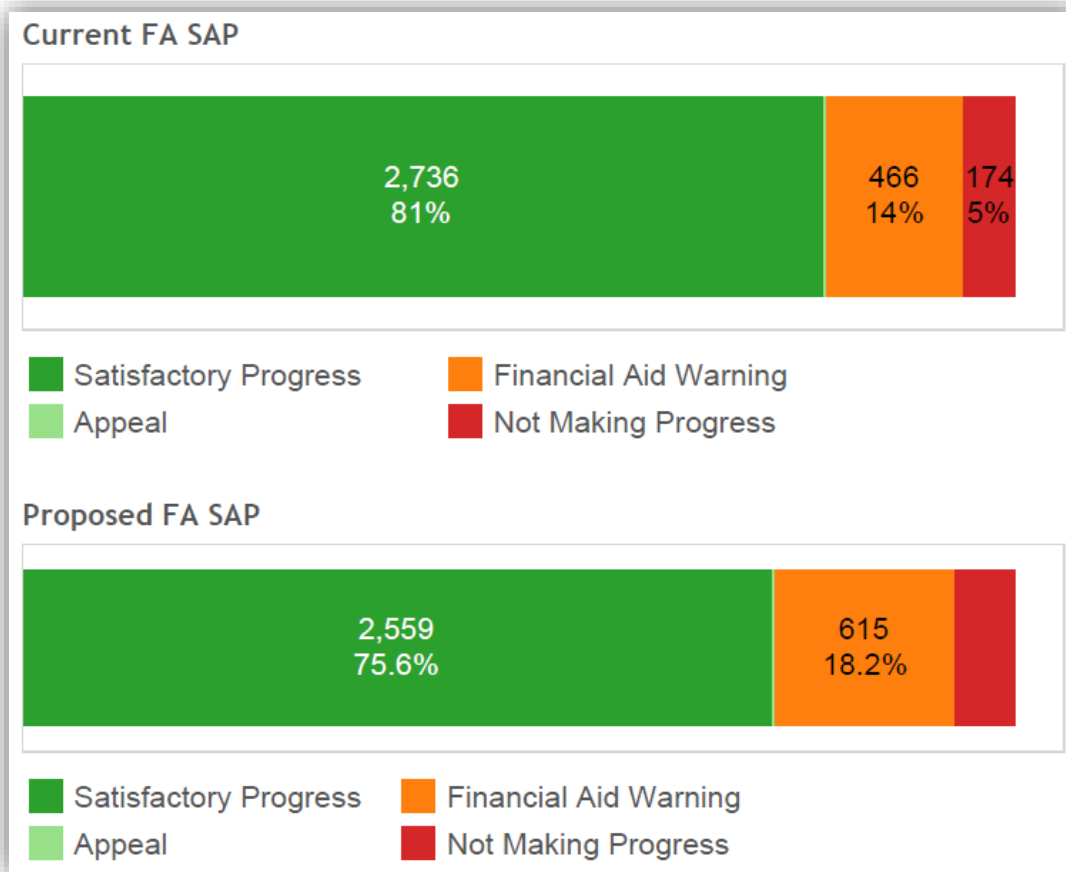
1. A total of 290 fewer students in “Good Standing”;
2. Only 11 of those students would move from “Good Standing” to “Probation”;
3. Almost all of the affected students (279/290) would have ended Fall semester on “Academic Suspension.”



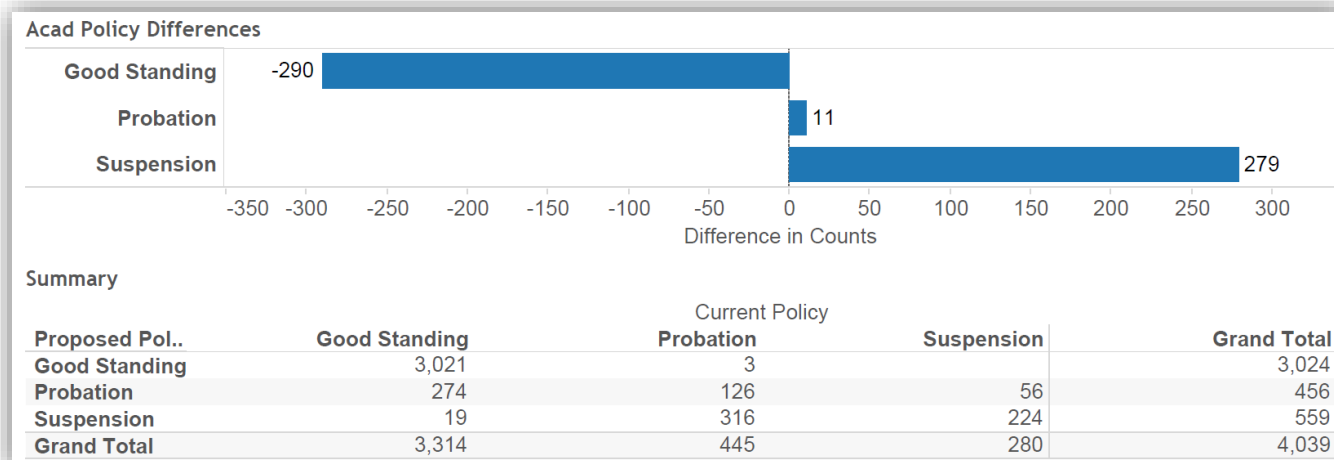
The Task Force also considered how the changes might impact Financial Aid status:

1. A total of 177 fewer students making Satisfactory Academic Progress;

2. A total of 149 more students would be on “Financial Aid Warning”;
3. A total of 28 more students would move to “Not Making Progress” and lose their Financial Aid.



Mr. Lifsey emphasized—and the Task Force agreed—that while these numbers are helpful in considering changes to the policy, they are not predictive. The new proposed standards were not in place in Fall 2014, so we cannot know how they would have affected student performance.



Interventions for Probation Students:

The Task Force agreed unanimously on the following interventions for students placed on probation:

1. A probation student must meet with an advisor at the beginning of the probation semester.
2. During that meeting, the probation student must sign an academic contract that outlines the student's responsibilities, a target GPA for the upcoming semester, and a promise to attend at least one Success Skills Workshop.
3. A probation student must also submit to the advisor a written reflection about the behaviors, attitudes, and circumstances that led to his or her academic difficulty.
4. The advisor will make the student aware of the academic support resources available in the Student Success Center and elsewhere on campus.
5. During a regular semester, a probation student is limited to 12 credit hours, which may be increased to 14 with the approval of the advisor.

6. During the summer semester, a probation student is limited to 6 total credit hours.
7. Probation students lose the privilege of self-registration for subsequent semesters until they earn back Good Academic Standing.