



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Brian Noland, President

From: Ms. Michel Beaver, A.V.P. Tax and Revenue Services

cc: Dr. Adam Green, Chief of Staff
Dr. B.J. King, Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Wilsie Bishop, Sr. V.P. for Academics and Interim Provost
Dr. Joe Sherlin, V.P. Student Life & Enrollment
Dr. Sam Mayhew, Assistant V.P. Student Life & Enrollment

Date: February 5, 2020

Re: Disenrollment Process Change Proposal

Students, faculty and staff have encountered several challenges with our current disenrollment process. Representatives from administration, advising and faculty were pulled together to address these challenges and provide a plan to improve the process. Below are the details of the current process, the challenges and the proposed changes to improve timing for student confirmation of attendance at ETSU, which will aim to decrease the number of students who are dropped from their classes. This committee will also continue to work towards several other opportunities for improvement that have presented themselves. They are listed below as well.

Current Process

There are two disenrollment dates each semester. The first one is the payment due date which is at 6 p.m. on the Friday before classes begin. Students must confirm registration by paying the total amount due or setting up a payment plan. Leading up to the payment due date the Bursars office is inundated with phone calls and emails requesting special holds on accounts so that students are not dropped for non-payment. These request come from faculty, staff and students. Students have the option of enrolling in a payment plan, which consist of four equal payments once a month from August through November. On that Friday at 6 p.m., the Bursar reviews the list of student balances and holds any student with a balance less than \$200. The Bursar then drops all students for non-payment at 6 p.m. on the Friday before classes begin. Students must reregister for classes. They face the possibility that their first choice is no longer available. The second disenrollment date is the census disenrollment. It occurs on the 14th day after classes begin and is on a Sunday or Monday at 4:30 p.m. The committee is not proposing any changes to the census disenrollment at this time.

Tax and Revenue Services

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Challenges with Current Process

- The Bursar's office must use judgement when deciding which students to hold in classes. After holding students in classes, students might not have their financial aid approved. The student may have thought they were going to get aid and would not have attended otherwise.
- The timing of the drop is at 6 p.m. on the Friday before classes begin. This leaves students with little to no help in resolving their reregistration and payment status until the following Monday.
- Students may need permits to reregister into classes. This requires faculty and staff to be available to help. Faculty and staff schedules often do not align with being available for these students.
- The Bursar's office has been holding students with a balance below \$200. There has not been clear communication to students about this. The \$200 amount has not increased as tuition has increased.

A review of other state institutions provided the following information:

- UT: 2 days before classes begin, students who owe more than 60% of their amount due are dropped. There is no confirmation process. Students make a deposit of \$250 upon acceptance to UT.
- TN Tech: Saturday before classes begin, non-confirmed students with a balance over \$200 are dropped. "Save Your Seat" holds students until the census purge.
- MTSU: 1 week before classes begin, Payment Status N, X are dropped.
- Memphis: 1 week before classes begin, non-confirmed students with balance over \$500 are dropped.
- Austin Peay- Drop all non confirmed students twice before classes begin. First time is 1 week and 2 days before classes begin and the second time is 2 days before classes begin.

Proposed Changes

- Move the drop date/payment deadline up four days to be 6 a.m. the Monday before classes begin. This would give students five additional days to work with financial aid to get their required documents in. This would also mean that faculty and staff would be available immediately after the drop to help reregister students.
- Increase the balance from \$200 to \$600 for the registration and hold amounts.
- New payment plan option of five installments instead of four with the additional payment being due July 31st. This lowers each installment payment amount.

- Scholarship listings from each College need to be provided to the Office of Financial Aid by the new deadlines. The deadline for fall 2020 is July 27th and for spring 2021 it is December 1st.

Possible Implication of Change

Any change provides the potential for consequence. The most likely consequence to moving the disenrollment date earlier is that more students would be dropped than in the past. A robust communication plan should mitigate these potential problems.

Proposed Communication Plan

If approved, communication of the new process for the fall 2020 will begin immediately. New Student and Family Programs will lead the communication for all orientations and email all students and parents who have attended orientation. University Advisement will be responsible for notifying students of this change while helping to register students. They will also hang posters including this communication in the advisement offices. The Bursar will provide messaging for Goldlink, all websites and all email communications. The Bursar will also implement a new pop up reminder calendar that will be available to students to download to their phone. The Bursar will work with University Relations to update all social media. Signs are to be posted across campus before students leave for summer break.

Future Opportunities for Committee

While exploring this issue, the committee has discussed other ideas that can enhance the disenrollment process and student/parent experience. These changes cannot be implemented immediately, but the committee would like to continue exploring these ideas for possible future implementation:

- Improve attendance reporting by reviewing best practices and implementing them here at ETSU. Possibly using technology to improve attendance as well as reviewing the timeline for taking attendance. Attendance reporting would have several benefits to faculty, students, and institutional processes.
- Require a \$250 deposit for new students. While a deposit would not directly impact disenrollment, it would provide a better idea about the number of newly admitted students who plan to attend ETSU.
- Review Touchnet enhancement capabilities for having multiyear guaranteed payment methods. Allowing parents and students to enroll once in a payment that continues for their duration as a student could make the process of payment easier for students/parents and potentially reduce workload of staff.