

APPROVED BY ATLAS ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL ON February 25, 2010

Date: February 25, 2010

To: Institute Faculty

From: John K. Bennett

Re: Institute Policy on Grade Appeals

One of the fundamental responsibilities of every faculty member in the institute is to evaluate the academic performance of our students fairly, consistently and conscientiously. The grades that our students earn form part of their permanent academic records, and can have far-reaching impacts on their future endeavors. As individual faculty members, and collectively as an institute, it is our duty to ensure that these grades represent an accurate assessment of performance.

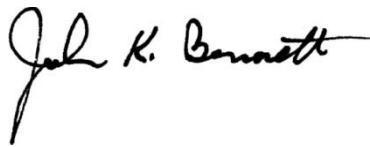
I take the prerogative of faculty members to assign grades very seriously, and I am extremely reluctant to interfere in this basic aspect of our academic lives. At the same time, both the courts and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) have recognized the need for a well-designed appeals process to provide remedies on those rare occasions when a student appeals a final grade, asserting that this final grade was assigned in an unprofessional manner, or that grading may have been improperly influenced by prejudice or other inappropriate factors. This process, reviewed by the ATLAS Administrative Council, is provided below.

### **ATLAS Institute Grade Appeal Process**

The following shall be the official policy of the ATLAS Institute. This policy shall apply to all grade appeals, whether at the graduate or undergraduate level. The Graduate School Academic Grievance Policy specifically excludes individual grade challenges regarding graduate courses.

- 1) Individual faculty members have primary authority and responsibility in all teaching-related matters, and are charged with carrying out those responsibilities in a professional manner. The Director's office has the authority and responsibility to deal with changes of grades in special and unusual cases such as those that might involve unprofessional faculty conduct in assigning the grade. Students should be aware that the Institute Director cannot require an instructor to change a properly assigned course grade. Issues of disagreement about whether, for example, a given assignment was worth a B or an A are decided solely by the individual instructor in charge.

- 2) When a student believes that a course grade has been improperly or unprofessionally assigned, and discussions between the instructor and the student have not led to a resolution, the student shall have the option of making a formal written appeal to the relevant Program Director for the instructor's program. The appeal must detail the basis for the appeal, and should state the specific remedy desired by the student. Any relevant written documentation should be included with the appeal. The appeal must be submitted within 30 days of the end of the academic term in which the course was taken. The instructor will be provided the opportunity to respond in writing to the student's appeal.
- 3) In cases where the Program Director is also the involved instructor, the Program Director will notify the Institute Associate Director, who will perform the duties of the Program Director as called for in this policy.
- 4) The Program Director or designee will meet (together or separately) with the student and with the instructor who taught the course. If the Program Director/designee is unable to secure a solution mutually acceptable to both student and instructor, then the following procedures will be followed:
  - a. The Program Director shall appoint an ad hoc Grade Appeals Committee, which will review the dispute. This Committee shall consist of at least three impartial faculty members competent in the subject matter of the course in question. Members of this committee need not be faculty of the Institute. The Program Director will provide the Committee with the student's appeal, a written response from the faculty member, and such other materials as may be considered relevant.
  - b. Within 30 days, the Committee will submit a report and recommendation to the Program Director, and the Program Director will recommend to the instructor either (1) that the originally assigned grade stand; or (2) that a revised final grade be assigned.
  - c. In cases where the instructor or student does not agree with the Committee's recommendation, the Program Director shall forward the written materials associated with the appeal, together with the recommendation of the Committee and the recommendation of the Program Director, to the Director of the Institute (or a designee), who will make the final decision on the student's grade appeal within 30 days. There is no appeal of the decision of the Director or designee.



John K. Bennett  
Archuleta Professor and Director