Academic Affairs Committee Notes on the Motion to Approve Course Forgiveness:

(1) We note that, based on statistics just received from Lou McLelland, Director of Institutional Analysis for the Office of Planning, Budget, and Analysis, only about 1 to 1.5 percent of students have re-taken courses under the Course Forgiveness policy. This amounts to very small numbers which, statistically, do not represent a large burden on instructors. BUT: This percentage appears to be growing; AND in some courses even one student retaking a class can cause significant work for the instructor. So while we believe that on the whole the impact of Course Forgiveness is minor, in some instances it may be major.

(2) Under the first item above, our committee wanted to make a definite distinction between undergraduate and graduate COURSES and undergraduate and graduate STUDENTS. Our intent is for the Course Forgiveness regulations to be determined by the status of the student, not necessarily by the level of the course. As an example, if an undergraduate student takes a graduate-level class and then wants to retake it under Course Forgiveness, our intention is that this should be counted as one of the two opportunities that student has as an undergraduate. On the converse, if a graduate student wishes to retake an undergraduate-level course, that will count as his or her only chance to retake any course under Course Forgiveness. Note that this completely replaces the limitation on credit hours under the existing Course Forgiveness pilot program, by specifying the limits in terms of course, not hours - while also making a distinction between undergraduate and graduate students.

(3) Regarding our second bulleted item, we advocate a policy that is consistent with existing standards for progress toward a degree, which are reflected in the grade levels now expressed. We had substantial discussion of this, with the viewpoint expressed in this bullet prevailing over the competing idea that even students earning high grades should be allowed to retake classes under Course Forgiveness. Among the opinions that ultimately persuaded us on this point were: allowing Course Forgiveness for students who obtained high grades initially would place an undue burden on faculty who may already be burdened by having to respond to Course Forgiveness for lower-level students; and high-GPA students might abuse this option as they fine-tuned their grade average (we felt it far better if such students just took other courses and did well).

(4) The combined effect of our third and fourth bulleted items is that a student must decide early in the semester whether to declare that he or she is taking the course under Course Forgiveness; and that once this is declared, it is a final decision. This means that the grade earned will replace the original grade regardless of whether it is higher or lower than the initial grade; and also that the student has used up one of her or his opportunities to use Course Forgiveness, even if the course is dropped later in the semester (in that case the GPA would be unaffected because the initial grade would stand, but the student would have lost one of her or his opportunities to use Course Forgiveness in the future). Our intention here was to inhibit students from using Course Forgiveness unless they are really serious about it and willing to accept some risk.
(5) We agreed that our final point, forbidding Course Forgiveness in cases where the initial grade was low because of a violation of the Honor Code, was of paramount importance. If this cannot be accommodated, then we would probably reverse our support for Course Forgiveness.

(6) We are not certain how to handle Course Forgiveness in combined BA/MA programs, where a student might be taking both undergraduate and graduate-level classes simultaneously in pursuit of a double degree. We did not think, however, that this Resolution should address such arcane details, so we suggest that policies for such cases will have to be worked out as they arise. We note that there will always be opportunities for petition to redress instances where the rules just don't apply, and we trust that the system will handle such cases (which we expect to be very rare) with grace.