

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTOTHE GOVERNING COUNCILREPORT NUMBER 112 OF THE ACADEMIC APPEALS BOARDSeptember 28th, 1987

To the Academic Affairs Committee,
University of Toronto.

Your Board reports that it held a hearing on Monday, September 28th, 1987 at 2:00 p.m., in the Falconer Room, Simcoe Hall, at which the following were present:

Professor J. B. Dunlop (In the Chair) Ms. Irene Birrell, Secretary
Professor F. Flahiff
Ms. K. Pearson
Mr. D. Power
Professor J. Slater

In Attendance:

Ms. *K* appellant
Mr. Alec Waugh, Registrar, Woodsworth Collge
Ms. Linda Gee, Director of Diploma and Certificate Programs, Woodsworth College

THE FOLLOWING ITEM IS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION

At a meeting on September 28th, 1987, the Academic Appeals Board heard the appeal of *MS K.* from a decision of the Petition Committee of Woodsworth College refusing her petition to be granted a waiver of suspension so that she could register in LIN 130Y (Introduction to Linguistics), a required course for the Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). The appeal was based on extenuating circumstances justifying relief from the application of the regulations concerning academic status. The Board's decision is that the appeal should be allowed.

The appellant had been placed on academic probation because her grade point average after 2.5 courses taken during the 1985-86 academic year was 1.34. The regulations on academic status required a G.P.A. of 1.5 after 2 courses. The appellant was informed of her status and that during the next session she would need to achieve a sessional G.P.A. of 1.7 or a cumulative G.P.A. of 1.5 to have the probation removed, failing which she would be suspended. In 1986-87, taking 2 courses, she obtained a sessional G.P.A. of 0.8 and a cumulative average of 1.1. Suspension followed.

The appellant had a creditable university record prior to her enrolment in the TESL Program. She blamed her poor performance on financial and personal difficulties, including protracted legal proceedings related to her employment, which caused her physical and emotional strain. While she could have withdrawn from the courses she was taking until the drop date she had some reason to hope circumstances would improve. They did not. She submitted a letter from her physician in support of her own evidence.

While every student has stresses of various sorts during an academic year, and must cope with them as well as he or she is able, there is a level at which they constitute such a serious and unusual burden as to be an unfair impediment to achievement of the required standards. It is true that this eventuality can in some cases be met by dropping a course. Yet if the student reasonably believes that the circumstances, or some of them, will soon change, it is understandable that he or she will not choose that solution. The decision should not be made more of a gamble than necessary by insisting that the student drop the course or pay for his or her misjudgment.

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It is not an easy line to draw, but on the basis of the evidence heard by the Board, it felt that the level had been reached in this case. Given the evidence of the appellant's ability to do creditable university work under congenial conditions, the Board concluded that it would be appropriate to waive the suspension and allow the appellant to register for another session. She remains, of course, on academic probation and must achieve a sessional G.P.A. of 1.7 or a cumulative G.P.A. of 1.5.

The appeal is allowed.

Secretary
October 20th, 1987

Chairman