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State limits dropped courses

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Dropping an unlimited number of courses is no longer an option here at Prairie View A&M University.

Effective Sept. 1, incoming freshmen and transfer students are only allowed to drop six courses during their undergraduate studies.

This is the result of a new state law passed by the Texas legislature in May and signed by Gov. Rick Perry in June. The law affects only students in public institutions.

Students are allowed to drop classes until the twelfth class day of each semester. Any course dropped after that is counted against them.

Previously, students were allowed to drop as many classes as they chose, whenever they chose. Now, students can drop a course whenever they like, but not as many as before.

"I don't really agree with the limit on the dropped courses," said freshman agriculture major Kedrick Hayes. "It's almost like forcing us to stay in a class and we end up not passing it [the class]."

This new law doesn't affect students who were previously enrolled at the university before September.

Other schools that have adopted this new program include Texas A&M University, University of Houston, and Texas Tech University, which has had its policy since 2004.

Many students question why the limit has been put in place this year.

According to the coordinating board which enforces guidelines for Prairie View, 58 percent of students at Texas public universities graduate within six years for a bachelor's degree.

"I think the new policy is to get on time graduation rates to increase and encourage students to select their classes more carefully," said senior Candace Davis. "The less amount of classes students drop, the more likely they will graduate on their expected graduation date," continued Davis.

There are exceptions in the new policy. Severe illness, death in the family, active duty military service, and changes in a student's work schedule are a few of the exceptions that may assist students.

While the primary purpose for the limit is to push for on-time graduation rates, the limit also seeks to reduce the number of dropped students that Prairie View has late in the semester.

As the semester progresses, it is clear that classrooms diminish in size and attendance.

"We always suggest and encourage tutoring that we offer at the university," said Deborah Dungee, university registrar.

Students were notified of this change in the new 2007-2008 student catalog.

Now, in addition to the things students have to keep up with such as how many loans they've borrowed or if they've been verified for financial aid, they must calculate how many classes they have left to drop before they've reached their limit.

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