

Passed
11/27/07

AR 18

TITLE: Requesting that the Educational Policy Committee Address Student Input Received on Plus/Minus Grading Implementation

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WHEREAS, at the Special Faculty Council Meeting of May 16, 2007 a motion from the Educational Policy Committee (D 5316-5318) was passed recommending that the plus/minus grading system currently used for graduate courses be extended to undergraduate courses,¹

WHEREAS, President William C. Powers, Jr. and Executive Vice President and Provost Dr. Steven W. Leslie signed off on the motion approved by the Faculty Council in letters dated June 20, 2007 and June 18, 2007, respectively, thus calling for the implementation of plus/minus grading,

WHEREAS, Student Government passed AR 6 on May 1, 2007 requesting that this motion from the Educational Policy Committee be tabled until adequate student opinion and feedback were ascertained on the issue,

WHEREAS, Student Government-appointed Faculty Council representatives (President Andrew Solomon, Vice President Nicole Trinh, and Two Year At-Large Representative Keshav Rajagopalan) expressed the nature and intent of AR 6 at the Faculty Council Meeting of May 7, 2007,²

WHEREAS, at the Faculty Council Meeting of May 7, 2007, past Chair of the Educational Policy Committee Dr. David Hillis said, "There was no implementation schedule specified in the motion. If you read the background material that was done on purpose in order to give us enough time to be able to do a good job of implementing it. [...] We didn't want to put a time deadline on this in order to allow there to be sufficient time to discuss each of these issues and be able to make the appropriate changes,"³

¹ <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2006-2007/minutes/spmin051607.html>

² <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2006-2007/minutes/min050707.html>

³ David Hillis, "Transcript of the Regular Faculty Council Meeting (May 7 2007)", pg. 21-22

WHEREAS, at the Faculty Council Meeting of May 7, 2007, current Chair of the Educational Policy Committee Dr. Desmond Lawler said that serious implementation questions raised by faculty would require ‘careful consideration,’”⁴

WHEREAS, the Senate of College Councils held a forum to discuss the implementation of the plus/minus grading system on October 18, 2007,⁵

WHEREAS, the Senate of College Councils documented the opinions and concerns expressed by students at this forum in the attached document (see notes),

WHEREAS, ideas from this document were presented to the Educational Policy Committee at a meeting on October 22, 2007 by Mr. Stephen Myers, Chairperson of the Senate of College Councils, and Mr. Reid Long, Policy Director of the Senate of College Councils,⁶

WHEREAS, the Faculty Council is currently considering a motion prepared by the Educational Policy Committee that will be voted on at the Faculty Council Meeting of December 10, 2007,⁷

WHEREAS, this motion does not address many of the opinions and feedback received at the forum held by the Senate of College Councils,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, Student Government requests that all opinions and concerns expressed by students about the implementation of the plus/minus grading system and contained in the document be thoroughly and thoughtfully reviewed by the Educational Policy Committee,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, Student Government requests that a written review be created by the Educational Policy Committee of all opinions and concerns of students expressed in that document and disseminated to the student body,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, a copy of this resolution be sent to President William C. Powers, Jr., Executive Vice President and Provost Dr. Steven W. Leslie, Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Juan C. Gonzalez, Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Dr. Soncia Reagins-Lilly, Chair of the Faculty Council Dr. Doug Burger, Chair of the Educational Policy

⁴ <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2006-2007/minutes/min050707.html>

⁵ <http://media.www.dailytexanonline.com/media/storage/paper410/news/2007/10/17/Opinion/Voice.Your.Grading.Concerns-3037065.shtml>

⁶ Conversation with Mr. Stephen Myers, Chairperson, Senate of College Councils

⁷ http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2007-2008/legislation/implement_plus_minus.html

Committee Dr. Desmond Lawler, all other members of the Educational Policy Committee, and Editor of *The Daily Texan* Ms. Claire Harlin.

Notes:

Document prepared by the Senate of College Councils from feedback received at a forum held on October 18, 2007

Plus/Minus Grading Implementation Forum Feedback

Implementation

What is the cost associated with the changing the system from the current A/B/C/D/F system to a plus/minus system? Estimates that have been thrown out have often reached \$4 million. Given that this is not a stated priority of this University then why spend that much money to do something that is not a priority.

Transfer Students

What happens to grades that were previously brought into the University that contained pluses and minuses and were changed to a standard A/B/C/D/F scale? Students who transferred want to know if they can get their pluses and minuses back in the new system.

A+ Issues

Many students felt that an A+ is needed in the system.

Even Grading

A system should be devised where grading is consistent among all sections of the course. Ideally student feeling is that they would like to see point breakdowns for each of the corresponding plus/minus grades.

Transparency

Students would like to see more definition to already existing requirements for grading policy on the syllabus. By including grading policy on the syllabus, it clearly sets the terms of the course and what students are expected to do.

Requirements

Will changes be made to the current GPA requirements for Honors programs and scholarships? Requirement grades for course prerequisites and graduations should be evaluated as well.

Notification

The University should launch a PR effort to make sure that graduate schools and potential employers know of the change so that students whose GPA is affected by the change are not penalized.

Grandfathering

Students who enrolled before the system was implemented should be exempted from the system. This type of policy is not uncommon among the schools who have changed to a plus/minus system.

Transcript

The transcript should clearly reflect which professors use a plus/minus system and which do not. It should also clearly reflect if students are not grandfathered into the system the semesters that they took course under which the system is in effect.