

DATE: May 22, 2014

FROM: Committee on Scholastic Standards and Petitions

TO: Faculty Senate

SUBJECT: Proposed changes to the Grading Policy

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For consideration by the Faculty Senate at the June 4, 2014 meeting.

In October, 2013, a faculty department representative to the Faculty Senate from the Darla Moore School of Business brought a petition to the Committee on Scholastic Standards and Petitions requesting a reexamination of the current grading policy to a plus/minus system.

The Committee on Scholastic Standards and Petitions spent the 2013-2014 academic year comprehensively reviewing the implications of a plus/minus system, including:

- Policies and procedures impacted at the department, college and university levels
- Grade inflation
- Grade precision
- Consistency with peer and peer aspirant institutions
- Experiences with similar grading policy changes at peer institutions
- Progression, retention, graduation, and scholarships
- Implementation resources (such as incorporation into the Banner System)
- Definition of a 'C' grade
- Input from the Columbia campus faculty
- Input from the Office of the Registrar
- Input from the Senior Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies
- Input from the Office of Admissions
- Input from students

To clarify faculty views with respect to arguments in support of changing to a plus/minus grading system and arguments in support of retaining the current grading system, the Committee emailed a survey to 1848 faculty on the Columbia campus in April 2014. The response rate was 29.1% (N=537). Of the 537 respondents, 444 (86%) prefer a plus-minus grading system citing greater precision and comparability with major universities across the United States as primary reasons.

The Committee on Scholastic Standards and Petitions appreciates the complexity of this decision and the need to include the Regional Campuses (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, and Union) in the survey administered on the Columbia campus. Given the results of careful study, the Committee on Scholastic Standards and Petitions moves to empower the Faculty Advisory Committee to:

- Distribute to the Regional Campuses (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter and Union) a similar survey tool used on the Columbia campus to solicit faculty views on the adoption of a plus-minus grading system;
- Solicit additional input from students through the Student Government body;
- Develop a comprehensive list of policy and procedural changes impacted;
- Identify reasonable barriers to implementation; and
- Bring to the Faculty Senate in the Fall of 2014 a report on those actions, and as appropriate, a resolution on a proposed change to the grading policy.

Attachments: USC Grading System Survey Results