

**Report to the Academic Senate
of the
Ad Hoc Committee on Plus/Minus Grades**

Arizona State University
November 25, 2002

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Plus/Minus Grades

This report of the ad hoc Committee on Plus/Minus Grades is designed to inform all members of the University community on the pros and cons of adopting a +/- grading system. By so doing, the Committee intends to make members of the Academic Assembly and especially their representatives in the Academic Senate aware of any consequences such a change is likely to entail. The result, we hope, is an informed decision by the Senate, justified by the information presented here and accepted by all as a well-founded judgment.

The Committee makes its own recommendation, but its members also realize that this decision is one that appropriately rests with the Academic Assembly through its representative body the Academic Senate. Either of those bodies may give different weight to the evidence and different consideration of the pros and cons.

Recognizing the historical fact that the Academic Senate has already passed one resolution to implement a plus/minus system, the majority of the Ad Hoc Committee has opted to place before the Senate an alternative form that follows the original motion with one major stipulation left unaddressed and probably unintended by the Senate resolution of 1993. The Committee forwards a proposal for a system, subsequently identified as System 2 (see Table 1), that implements a full measure of plus and minus at the A, B, C, and D levels, but with no plus or minus for the E grade. However, while the plus and minus grades shall be recorded on the transcript, no increment or decrement in grade point shall be assigned to the plus or minus for purposes of calculating the grade point average. For example, the A+, A, and A- grades will all receive 4.0 grade points.

Having placed this model before the Academic Senate for its consideration, it is nevertheless the sense of a majority of the Ad Hoc Committee that ASU should not adopt a +/- grading scheme but rather retain its current system, subsequently labeled System 1. The Committee majority gives greater weight to the evidence presented here that such a change offers few benefits overall, while posing potential problems for students at both ends of the academic success spectrum, those who operate in the *summa cum laude* range of 3.8 and higher and those who live nearer the 2.0 mark required for academic success.

History of Plus/Minus at ASU

In April, 1992, ASU's Academic Senate approved Resolution 23 (see Appendix B) to establish a grading system that would include + and - options for B and C grades, as well as A- and D+ options. No A+, D-, nor E+ and E- grades were envisioned. The plus grade would add .3 points to the standard grade point while the - grade would subtract .3 from the standard grade point of A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0 and D=1.0. Resolution 23 was forwarded to University President Lattie Coor, who deferred action on the resolution until the capability to implement it was developed by Information Technology (IT).

Table 1. Various Grading Systems of ASU Peer Institutions and Selected Others

System 1		System 2		System 3		System 4		System 5		System 6		System 7		System 8	
A	4.0	A+ A A-	4.0 4.0 4.0	A+ A A-	4.00 4.00 3.67	A+ A A-	4.33 4.00 3.67	A A-	4.00 3.67	A A-	4.00 3.67	A A-	4.00 3.67	A	4.0
B	3.0	B+ B B-	3.0 3.0 3.0	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B	3.5 3.0
C	2.0	C+ C C-	2.0 2.0 2.0	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C	2.33 2.00	C+ C	2.5 2.0
D	1.0	D+ D D-	1.0 1.0 1.0	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00	D	1.00	D	1.0
E	0.0	E	0.0	E+ E	0.33 0.00	E	0.00	E+ E	0.33 0.00	E	0.00	E	0.00	E	0.0
ASU Arizona NAU Oklahoma Texas U Ill.-Chicago Kansas (varies)		Maryland MIT +/- grades appear on transcripts but do not affect gpa calculations		UCLA UC-Berkeley Missouri-no E+ Nebraska-no E+		Iowa Oregon Stanford North Carolina State		Cincinnati Colorado Connecticut Kansas (varies) USC Iowa State Florida State ¹ Ore. St.-no E+ Temple-no E+ Washington ²		Ohio State Wash. State Minnesota (±.333) ASU (Resolution 23, 1992)		Penn State		Rutgers Some schools use ± 0.3; others ± 0.33; some ± 0.333. Florida and Rutgers do otherwise.	

1. Florida State uses increments and decrements of 0.25. Thus, an A- is 3.75 while B+ is 3.25.

2. The University of Washington grades by 0.1 points and then assigns letter values. As A is 3.9-4.0, A- is 3.5-3.8, etc.

In Fall, 2001, the Administrative Systems Priorities Oversight Committee, led by Dr. Milton Glick, asked Information Technology (IT) to reassess their ability to implement +/- grades. The assessment showed that with changes in the technical environment that have taken place since 1992, it would in fact be possible to implement +/- grades within the Student Information System with a nine-to-twelve month programming effort. The IT staff was then asked to seek clarification of the specifics required by the Senate, including a specific implementation calendar, and prepare to staff the project.

In effect, the issue of +/- grades came anew to many of those in the Senate. Citing the length of time since the initial Senate resolution adopting a +/- grading system, Senate President Mort Munk ruled that the Senate should revisit the decision. The earlier Senate decision did not seem to be well-informed, in the sense of having examined the various consequences of a system change. In addition, the membership of the Academic Assembly had witnessed many departures and many new additions during that time. Finally, the past decade witnessed a number of adoptions of +/- grade systems that could be useful in making certain that any system adopted is best for our particular setting. An opportunity for the Academic Assembly through its Senate to revisit its earlier decision seemed appropriate.

Consequently, President Monk appointed an *ad hoc* committee, chaired by Senate President-Elect George Watson and representative of the different colleges and other interests, with special attention to naming individuals familiar with student academic issues generally, and more specifically the particular needs and concerns of students in the Honors College and intercollegiate athletics. The make-up of the Committee may be seen in Appendix A.

Description of the Committee's work

The Committee met on four occasions during the Spring, 2002, semester and twice again in the Fall prior to the release of this report. During that time, it gathered the information presented here, including invited presentations to the Committee by a number of individuals with a particular knowledge of and interest in the type of grading system employed at ASU. Presenters were asked to submit a statement in writing and respond to questions from Committee members. Those presentations informed the writing of this report and written statements are included in the Appendix material.

The Committee chair and certain other senators also received input from students, both informally and formally at one meeting of ASASU and at one of the Academic Senate meetings. The basic points made by students are incorporated into this report.

The intent of this report is to inform the University community as fully as possible of the Committee's findings in order that the Academic Senate may make its recommendation to the president fully confident that it represents the will of the Academic Assembly. Members of the Academic Assembly should understand that the bylaws of the Assembly permit any decision of the Academic Senate to be subjected to review by the Academic Assembly (see ACD 112-01.II.D.3).

Grading Systems in Use Around the Nation

There are a variety of grading systems in place among universities around the nation, many of which were adopted during the 1990s up to the present. Among PAC-10 schools, ASU peer universities, and a few others that came to the Committee's attention, eleven different systems were observed. These eleven have been grouped into 8 basic systems with the other 3 acknowledged as minor variations of a basic type (see Table 1).

Noteworthy is the fact that no Arizona state universities use a +/- system. However, all other universities in the PAC-10 athletic conference do. Moreover, all but 3 of ASU's peer institutions (viz., Texas, Oklahoma, and the U. of Illinois at Chicago) have some sort of +/- system in place.

The standard practice in such systems is to increment the standard letter grade by 0.33, sometimes carried to only one (0.3) or out to three (0.333) decimal places, for a plus grade. Thus, a grade of B+ becomes a 3.3. Similarly a minus grade decrements the standard letter grade by 0.33 (or 0.3 or 0.333). A B- in such a system typically received a grade credit of 2.67. Florida State differs by using increments and decrements of 0.25. Rutgers has a system that permits only plus supplements to a standard grade, no minuses, and it allocates a 0.5 to that plus grade (see Group 8 in Table 1).

The most common method in place is the System 5 model shown in Table 1. It features no A+ or E- grades, but otherwise, with a couple of exceptions at the E+ level, there are pluses and minuses at each grade level. ASU's Academic Senate Resolution 23 in 1992 proposed System 6, one in which there are no A+, D-, or E+ grades.

Discounting the Rutgers system that has no minus grades at all, the other six +/- systems vary largely at the top of the scale and toward the lower end. Systems 2, 3, and 4 all have an A+ but only System 3 provides an increment for that grade, and only 3 schools in the sample employ that system. Otherwise, what distinguishes the systems is the presence or absence of + and - grades at the C, D, and E levels. Only 1 system and 1 school eliminate the C- and that school, Penn State, did so only after considerable debate.

System 2 is a hybrid model that has come into play in at least two universities of note, MIT and Maryland. Both have opted to employ a +/- system in which the pluses and minuses appear on a student's transcript but are not used to calculate grade point averages for external reporting. MIT adopted their system after a 3 year trial period and subsequent evaluation (see Appendix C), while the University of Maryland is currently in its own trial evaluation of such a system.

The University of Washington has a different model of assigning points that then plug into a model that most closely resembles System 5. Faculty assign numeric grades in increments of 0.1, and those points are then assigned letter grades that look more like the rest of the world. Grades of 3.9 and 4.0 are As; 3.5 to 3.8 constitute an A- and so on down the line.

Questions Regarding Plus/Minus Grading

Does a +/- system help curb grade inflation?

The short answer is “No.” However, such a question not only betrays an underlying bias regarding grades, it also misses the point. The real issue is whether a +/- system will affect grade accuracy. Theoretically, it should. Methodologically, the goal is to provide a grade that minimizes error, namely, that difference between the grade representation of the score assigned to a student and what the instructor would consider to be a student’s true score. By providing a finer grading scale, instructors can come closer to assigning a grade that accurately reflects a student’s “true” score.

A computer model developed at Wake Forest University (see Appendix D) estimates error in grade assignment at between a root mean square of 0.3 to 0.7 in a system not using +/- . That error drops to between 0.3 and 0.33 for a +/- system. Certain assumptions about their model are unrealistic, but it does capture the common sense understanding that a student whose “true” grade is represented by the score of 81 on a 100 point scale is more accurately captured with a grade of B- (assuming 80 is the minimum required to fall in the B range) than either a grade of B or C. Assuming a certain amount of random error were involved in estimating this student’s “true” score of 81, there is some chance of this student’s scores failing to reach the B level, resulting in a grade of C in a non-plus/minus system. In a plus/minus system, the student would more likely receive a C+, resulting in less error, and, of course, the best chance of receiving a B-, closest to the “true” grade.

Clearly, faculty who feel too limited in their grade options will feel that a +/- system will permit truer grading. A 1999 analysis of faculty and student reactions to the implementation of +/- at MIT over the previous three years revealed overwhelming support by faculty and strong support from students regarding the efficacy of +/- . Over 70% of the students and fully 85% of the faculty felt that +/- modifiers provided better feedback to students regarding student work. Over 90% of the faculty reported the belief that their assessment techniques provided them sufficient information with which to assign +/- grades. Both graduate (71%) and undergraduate (64%) students tended to agree with that assessment.

What impact does +/- have on grade point average?

This question needs to be broken down into subcomponents because the effects differ for different students.

Overall institutional grade point average

In two different impact studies, MIT and North Carolina State University (NCSU), the impact of switching to a +/- system had small, but somewhat consistent effects overall on GPA. One-third of the undergraduates in both institutions saw a decline in their GPA, albeit typically not much of one. At MIT only 4% saw an increase of 0.1 or more. On the other hand, almost 23% of NCSU undergraduates saw an increase in their GPA. In the case of NCSU, the middle rows of Table 2 present their comparison of the actual institutional GPA using +/- and the GPA that would occur if the +/- supplements are

Table 2. Usage and Apparent Effects of Plus/Minus System at North Carolina State University

		Fall 94		Spring 95		Fall 95		Spring 96		Fall 96		Spring 97	
		UG	G	UG	G	UG	G	UG	G	UG	G	UG	G
Percentage of all grades awarded which were	+	2.7	5.1	10.1	7.0	9.8	10.8	11.1	10.0	11.5	11.0	12.0	10.3
	-	2.5	5.0	11.3	7.7	11.3	11.5	12.4	11.0	12.5	12.0	12.9	10.5
Percentage of course sections in which at least one + or - grade was awarded		13.5	21.5	41.2	34.4	46.1	45.9	48.2	45.7	49.4	50.3	51.2	47.8
Percentage of course credit hours in which at least one + or - grade was awarded		13.7	24.4	49.7	32.4	47.4	49.2	52.1	43.5	55.1	49.0	56.8	44.1
Mean GPA	Using +/-	2.70	3.49	2.65	3.60	2.64	3.57	2.66	3.54	2.72	3.54	2.73	3.53
	Without +/-	2.70	3.50	2.66	3.61	2.67	3.58	2.67	3.56	2.73	3.56	2.74	3.55
Percentage of students whose GPAs are now ____ they would apparently be without the +/- scale													
	higher than	7.7	6.9	22.9	7.0	22.0	12.0	22.6	10.3	22.8	11.4	23.1	9.1
	the same as	81.7	82.5	44.5	78.3	44.8	67.5	43.0	70.2	43.1	67.0	42.4	72.2
	lower than	10.6	10.6	32.7	14.7	33.2	20.5	34.4	19.5	34.1	21.6	34.4	18.8

stripped. Such a comparison should be done with caution. There is no guarantee that a student receiving an A–, for example, would have received an A had no +/- option been available.

Impact on students with 3.8 to 4.0 GPA

There seems little doubt that the number of 4.0 students will decline in a +/- system and likely that fewer will make ASU's 3.8 standard for graduating *summa cum laude*. That is suggested by the model developed at Wake Forest (see appendix D) and borne out by the data at NCSU.

At NCSU, the percentage of all undergraduate grades that were As hovered around 31 to 32% in the years immediately preceding the change to +/- . In the first three years after +/- , the percentage of grades that were in the A range (viz., A+, A, and A–) increased slightly to 33%, almost 34%. However, the A and A+ grades were only 28% of that 33%; the other 5% was A–, which suggests that some As are going to drop to A–. Among B, C, and D grades, there were more plus grades than minus grades, but in the A range, there were more than twice as many A– as A+ grades. Even when the NCSU analysts modeled a scenario of giving A+ grades a 4.33 credit, around 10% of all students, (not just the top students) would see their grade point averages decrease. This is substantially less than the third who saw their GPA drop under the NCSU system that rewarded an A+ with a credit of 4.0, but 10% is still not an insubstantial number. Subsequent to their study, NCSU adopted a system of awarding an A+ 4.33 grade points.

Impact on students hovering around a 3.5

The 3.5 GPA is significant because it serves as a cut point for many students who are on merit-based financial aid. The Wake Forest model suggests that students needing to maintain a 3.5 GPA will be little affected by any change to +/- . Such students tend to operate in what would become the A, A–, B+, B range. While some of their As will be an A– at 3.67 grade points, many of their B grades will be B+, scored at 3.33 rather than the 3.0 for a B. Losses in GPA at the A level resulting from the A– will be offset by gains in GPA brought about by the B+.

Impact on students hovering around a 3.0

The +/- option will reduce variation in the grades of students who operate at the 3.0 level but it is unlikely to have any appreciable effect on their overall GPA. Unlike those operating at the 4.0 level, in which a ceiling effect limits going higher, preventing offsets for lower grades, those who hover around 3.0 are as likely to see an increase as a decrease in GPA. Indeed, given the narrower span of a larger number of grade options, there may now be greater incentive for students to strive for that next higher level. Low B students, for example, now have an incentive to do better. Even though an A may remain just as elusive as before, moving from a B– to a B or even up to B+ is realistic and has real consequences for one's GPA.

Impact on students hovering around a 2.0

The Wake Forest model suggests no difference on the impact of +/- between those students who operate in the range 3.0 and those at 2.0. However, there is one important

difference. A GPA that drops below 2.0 has severe consequences for successful academic standing. Consequently, the grade of C– at only 1.67 grade points is a real problem. Even so, just as with students at the 3.0 level, there is unlikely to be any appreciable impact on overall GPA, especially given the increased incentive for students to perform better within a general grade range of A, B, or C. Only a little stronger effort and better performance can produce an actual change in the grade point credit for the course.

The real problem with the C– grade arises from its conflict with current requirements for a grade of C or higher in order to receive course credit. This requirement typically applies in a student’s upper division major courses. Some universities have kept that C minimum, in effect raising the requirement for a passing grade. For example, a student in a grading system with no +/- options who achieves a score of 70 from an instructor using 70 as the cut off point for a C before +/- will receive a passing grade of C. Under +/-, however, a score of 70 (or even 71 or 72) would likely be assigned a C–, not good enough to achieve a passing grade of C.

On the other hand, if that problem is handled by permitting a C– to be an acceptable passing grade, as some universities have done, then an anomaly arises in which a student could pass all of his or her courses at an acceptable level, namely, at a C– or higher and yet not have attained the 2.0 necessary for graduation or successful academic standing. This issue is raised in the statement of Professor Jerry Kingston, ASU’s longtime Faculty Athletics Representative (see Appendix E), who points out that an athlete needing to meet the NCAA’s requirement of a 2.0 to be eligible for competition could achieve a series of C grades, except for one C–, and thus be declared ineligible. The pressures to eliminate that minus on a grade or get another grade elevated to a plus will be felt, not only by students, but by faculty as well.

These problems may be little more than a nuisance, but the faculty at Penn State was sufficiently perturbed that it adopted a +/- system with no C– grade. Some schools have kept the C as the minimum passing grade; others declare any grade in the C range as passing, while still others have specifically listed C– as being the minimum acceptable grade for those courses formerly requiring a C minimum.

ASU’s policy in accepting transfer credit also reflects this problem. ASU specifically prohibits the transfer of course credit from other institutions “. . . in which the lowest passing grade (D) or a failing grade was received.” Yet, in implementing this policy, ASU precludes the transfer of credit for any course in which a student received a grade below C, or 2.0. It is an issue that must be addressed if a +/- system is adopted.

Inter-class equity

Although any adoption of a +/- system provides an instructor with the option of using the +/- refinements, its optional status would cause problems in multi-section courses offered by different instructors if some instructors used +/- and others did not. The solution is clear, if not exactly easy. Multiple section courses should have an agreement among instructors about the uniform application of +/-.

Learning incentive

The impact of grades on the learning process remains an issue of some dispute, almost surely because grades serve as incentives for some students while not for others. One can argue that the smaller grade intervals of +/- should increase incentives to achieve the next higher grade because it is more within reach. On the other hand, one could argue that there is both less to gain and less to lose in a +/- system, thereby decreasing incentive. The MIT study, if nothing else, certainly shows a large discrepancy between faculty and student attitudes on the impact that grades can have on issues of learning, pressure, and competition.

Grade grievances and appeals

The Committee did not locate data on the impact of +/- on grade appeals or grade grievances. Anecdotal evidence was heard that such appeals and grievances could increase by 30% or more. Although the narrower grade increments in a +/- system suggest that there is less to gain in a grade change, narrower increments also suggest that any change should be easier to attain. As noted previously in discussing the C- grade, the pressures to remove a minus or to gain a + will be felt by students and faculty alike. More grade appeals seem likely.

Technical Implementation Issues

The initial resolution of the Senate to adopt a +/- system was never approved by President Coor, in large part because the adoption was not technologically feasible for ASU at the time. The issue of adopting +/- arose again last year at the initiative of the Administrative Systems Priorities Oversight Committee through Information Technology when it informed the Senate that modifications to the Student Information System could now be made to accommodate +/-.

In a statement from Michael Dixon, Senior Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions at ASU (see Appendix F), our Degree Auditing Reporting System (DARS) currently interprets transfer grades from other institutions using a system in which increments and decrements are carried only to one decimal place. Thus, an A- is 3.7, not 3.67 and a B+ is 3.3, not 3.33. If ASU adopts a +/- system, Dixon suggests conversion practices for transfer course work with +/- grades be synchronized with the system used for ASU course work with +/- grades. This would ease any explanation of our system to others.

Articulation

If adopted, ASU will be the only higher education institution among Arizona's state universities and the community colleges to employ +/- . On the one hand, this should not present any real problems on the technical side; all schools have to deal with students coming in from systems that have +/- . On the other hand, the issues discussed earlier regarding the C- grade come into play. As Zoila Gamero de Tovar, ASU's director of Academic Transfer Articulation, noted in her presentation to the Committee, there is a considerable amount of reverse transfer between ASU and the community colleges. Will the community colleges accept a C- grade from an ASU student desiring to take a community college course in which the C- grade at ASU was from a prerequisite course?

Recruitment

What is unknown in the adoption of +/- is whether ASU's recruitment of top students, and others for that matter, would be adversely affected. If potential recruits to the Honors College compare the likelihood of graduating *summa cum laude* or even with a 4.0 at ASU v. the University of Arizona, will the greater difficulty of securing that GPA in a +/- system tip the balance to the U of A? We have no data on that issue. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that grade-conscious Honors students believe that their GPAs would be adversely affected by a change to a +/- system that attaches numerical weights to pluses and minuses.

Assessment of Various Systems

That any single system of grading is superior to another is clearly arguable given the number of systems in use. Reasonable faculty at quality universities have adopted different systems after careful consideration and deliberation. Stanford's use of a 4.3 as a meaningful A+ grade heeds the complaint of top students that all other grade levels have both the + and -. Yet faculty at most schools have rejected that rationale. Penn State reasoned that having no C- grade would solve the anomaly of having a student pass a course but receive a grade point credit of less than passing. That too is a reasonable system, but one rejected by most other universities with a +/- system.

This section examines each of 8 different grading systems, with comments bearing on a couple of additional variations within those 8 formats. These assessments can serve as the basis for any motion to adopt any particular system.

System 1, no plus or minus grades

This is the current system for ASU and therefore qualifies for the aphorism, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." To opt for a change must be to accept that a +/- system provides advantages worth the hassle. Proponents of not changing the system do not see sufficient advantage to doing so. They do, however, see certain disadvantages from a changeover, which include: losing some competitive advantage to other Arizona schools for top students who might see ASU as a more difficult place to maintain a *summa cum laude* grade point average, problems resulting from a C- grade as not meeting the C requirement for credit in many majors, problems resulting from a C- grade receiving only a 1.67 point credit, below the 2.0 required for acceptable academic standing, an increase in grade grievances, pressure to make ever finer distinctions among student performances that may not be done with any great reliability or validity. Proponents of this system also see the presumed benefits of change as arguable, at best. They do not see the +/- system influencing so-called grade inflation. It is invalid, in their minds, for proponents of +/- to hold simultaneously that a +/- system can help control grade inflation while also having little impact on over all grade point average.

System 2, +/- grades on the transcript but no increments or decrements for GPA calculations

Proponents see this system as achieving the positive goals of +/- grading while eliminating the negatives, which mostly involve the impact of +/- on grade point average.

Faculty get to make those finer distinctions among student performances and those distinctions are recorded on the student's transcript, there for any discerning closer look by those assessing a student's academic work. On the other hand, proponents of System 2 argue, virtually all of the consequences seen as negative by proponents of no change at all (System 1) also dissipate. The question of whether a C- constitutes a passing grade in one's major may still remain, but it is easily resolved with a policy that declares a C- is in fact a passing grade in those circumstances. Admittedly, though, such a declaration by ASU does not mean other schools will recognize that declaration as valid.

System 3, +/- grades at all levels (except E) with corresponding grade point increments and decrements except that A+ = A = 4.0

System 3 and the closely corresponding System 5 constitute what appears to be the standard practice for plus/minus grading systems. They differ primarily in the fact that System 3 has an A+ grade while System 5 does not. However, the A+ in System 3 offers a grade point credit of 4.0, which does not distinguish it from the grade of A in either System 3 or System 5. Schools in either of these two systems may also be distinguished by whether or not they provide for an E+ grade. Some do; some don't.

Proponents of System 3 see it as the logical application of the philosophy of having plus and minus grades. Faculty are given the widest range of choices in assigning + and - minus grades at each grade level. There is some difference of opinion regarding whether a grade of E+ makes any sense. System 3, however, does accept the notion that the highest grade point level should be 4.0 and the lowest should 0.0. Consequently, while at A+ can be a recorded grade on the transcript, it receives only a 4.0, no higher than a grade of A. Because an E is already 0.0, no one has seen any sense or need to record a grade of E-.

System 4, +/- grades at all levels (except E) with an A+ = 4.33

System 4 responds to the arguments of top students that the failure to increment the grade of A+ above that of an A introduces a bias against the very best students. Simply illustrated, whereas a B+ and a B- average out to a B at 3.0, an A+ and an A - under System 3 result in something less than an A, namely, a 3.83. By permitting an A+ to rise to 4.33, an A+ and an A- average out to an A at 4.0. Proponents of System 4 see it as the fair application of + and - to each grade level with corresponding increments and decrements at each grade level.

System 5, +/- grades at all levels, except for no A+, no E-, and in some instances no E+

System 5 is the most common plus/minus system in use. It addresses the issue raised in System 3 that an A+ and an A have the same grade point value by simply eliminating the A+, adopting the 4.0 as the highest grade offered. Proponents see this as protecting the integrity of the 0.0 to 4.0 grading system. With proponents of System 3, those who favor System 5 see it as the purest implementation of a +/- system within the confines of a 4.0 system, otherwise offering the full range of grades needed by faculty to provide meaningful distinctions in the learning performances of their students.

System 6, +/- grades at each level between an A (no A+) and a D (no D-)

System 6 responds to the purported bias of no A+ or incremented A+ grade by eliminating the D- grade, thus ensuring an equal number of + and - options. That is to say, 3 grades have + options (viz., B, C, and D) while 3 have - options (viz., A, B, and C). No doubt there are also those who favor this system that see little utility in a D- grade.

System 7, +/- grades at each level between an A (no A+) and a C (no C-)

Penn State adopted this system after considerable reflection focusing on how to deal with one troubling aspect of any +/- system of the System 3 through System 6 types. The standard C- grade point value is 1.67. Most universities place successful academic standing at 2.0 and a passing grade at C. By eliminating the C- grade, System 7 avoids the problem of what to do with a C- in terms of whether it constitutes a passing grade and, assuming that C- is considered passing, of having all passing grades while still failing to meet the 2.0 minimum required for successful academic standing.

System 8, no - grades, only +s at the B and C level, with 0.5 increments.

Rutgers employs a unique system that provides only B+ and C+ as grades that have increments or decrements. In this case, Rutgers students receive a 3.5 for a B+ and a 2.5 for a C+.

Committee Recommendation

The majority expression of the Committee is that the University maintain a grading system that does not use +/- . However, given the previous resolution of the Senate to adopt a +/- system, the Committee has opted to place a +/- option before the Senate. To that end, the Committee recommends the following:

1. Circulate the report between this Senate meeting and the January meeting among the Academic Assembly, various other relevant constituency organizations and representative bodies that are affected by the proposal.
2. Act in January to reconsider Resolution 23 of the Senate from 1992.
3. Move the Committee-recommended Senate Resolution 3 to first read as a substitute motion of the 1992 Senate 23 resolution, which is now a motion by virtue of the reconsideration vote. The resolution proposes to implement a +/- system that corresponds to System 2 described above.
4. At the February, 2003, Senate meeting, debate the issue raised by the substitute motion and then vote.
5. Pass the substitute motion, Senate Resolution 3, which now becomes the +/- motion pending before the Senate.
6. Defeat the pending +/- motion, Senate Resolution 3, maintaining the current grading system intact.

The rationale of the Committee's action to propose a +/- system and then recommend its defeat reflects the majority of the Committee's sense that introducing a +/- system is not in the best interests of ASU's faculty or students. On the other hand, the Committee feels a responsibility to put forward some +/- option to the Academic Assembly, given that the Senate of that Assembly has already approved a system and one that the Committee finds less desirable than another alternative. If the Academic Assembly wishes to have a +/- grading system, then the unanimous Committee recommendation is for the System 2 model.

System 2 fulfills the desire of faculty to have available greater refinements in grading without the concomitant disadvantages of +/- for those students whose grade point average hovers around 2.0, the problems surrounding the C- grade, and the potential negative impact on recruitment for the very top students. Given that there is no evidence a +/- system affects so-called "grade inflation" or has any appreciable effect on aggregate GPA scores, nor that there is any evidence a university's grading system affects the institution's reputation, the Committee sees no other +/- system that offers advantages that compensate for the disadvantages surrounding the 2.0 GPA, C- grades, and the recruitment of top students.

Appendix A

Roster of the Ad Hoc Committee on Plus-Minus Grades

Craig Allen, professor, Journalism and Mass Communication

Terrence Ball, professor, Political Science

Veronica Burrows, professor, Chemical and Bio Materials Engineering

Sandra Hatfield-Clubb, Associate Athletic Director, Intercollegiate Athletics

Gerry Corey, Assistant Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Barbara Crowe, professor, School of Music

Dominic Gomez, undergraduate student, ASASU

Mary Killeen, professor and associate dean, Nursing

David Krus, professor, Psychology in Education

Paul Petersen, graduate student, ASASU

Philip Regier, professor and associate dean, School of Accountancy

Robert Soza, Dean of Students

George Watson (Chair), professor, Journalism and Mass Communication

Ex Officio nonvoting members

Gillian Bailey, Information Technology

Linda Burns, Information Technology

Jan Patock, University Testing Services

Appendix B

Arizona State University
Faculty Senate
Fall 1991/Spring 1992 Session

|A|

Senate Resolution #23 (1991-92)

Date of Introduction: March 23, 1992

Resolution introduced by: Student-Faculty Policy Committee (Neil Berman, chair)

Approved by the Faculty Senate: April 20, 1992

1. RESOLVED that the grading system at Arizona State University be changed
2. so that all instructors may use plus and minus grades except for A+, D-, E+
3. and E-. The new system will include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, E.
4. For purposes of calculating grade point averages the plus grade will add
5. 0.3 and the minus grade will subtract 0.3 from the A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0,
6. D=1.0 and E=0. In order to reduce the cost of implementing this policy,
7. the change should take place when records and forms require changes in
8. addition to the +/- system. The various departments and colleges should be
9. directed to examine their requirements with respect to the new system.

JUSTIFICATION AND BACKGROUND

Letters to the Student-Faculty Policy Committee and to President Coor during the 1990-91 academic year requested consideration of a finer grading system at Arizona State University. This year the Committee surveyed many departments and asked for comments from Faculty Senators. The result was overwhelming support for a finer grading system. The most common reason in support of the change was to provide students a better evaluation of their performance and to encourage raising the level of their performance.

The Committee also called the registrar at all of the PAC-10 schools that had finer grading systems (six universities). Although no schools routinely report overall GPA, there was a perception that there was no change or a slight increase in GPA after changing from the ABCDE system to the finer system. All of the respondents felt that there was a positive acceptance by students and faculty. The changes were instituted along with other sometimes major changes in the records systems but roughly 500 hours of time were required to reprogram the systems and change forms. Small increases in appeals because of grading errors were noted.

The ASU Registrar's Office estimated that 1500 hours of time would be needed to change the computer programs and forms. The major problem would be to change the one byte needed for the present grading system to two or three bytes for the new system. The ASU grading system has been locally constructed and it would be impossible to use

any other one in place at another school. The Committee decided that there are proposals for changes in the records that accumulate every few years and the cost of implementing a finer system should not be a deterrent to its recommendation.

An extensive study of the experience of Washington State University in adopting a finer grading system was brought to the attention of the committee by the Registrar's Office. This study mentions a survey of all higher education about five years ago that showed that finer grading systems began to increase in popularity about 20 years ago and about 50% of the schools had such grading systems. Few junior colleges appeared to have finer grading so more than a majority of four year colleges have changed. There appears to be a steady increase in schools which have adopted the finer grading system.

The Committee looked at different grading system and decided to recommend the one presented in the resolution. We feel that there should be an upper limit of A not A+ and that there should be a lower passing line of D (so D- is not included). This means that 4.0 is the highest grade and 1.0 is the lowest passing grade. An upper limit of 4.0 means that an overall average of 4.0 will become less common than at present but it would represent much higher achievement. Those on the Committee that have evaluated graduate school applicants indicated that the level of achievement is easiest to evaluate when there is no A+. The Committee also considered the A-AB-B-BC-C-CD-D-E system and the University of Washington system which grades in tenths of a point from 4.0 down to 1.0. We felt that the best system for ASU would be one that retained the present major grade distribution ranges with a finer scale centered about these. The intermediate AB etc. system results in a new grade distribution with eight grades and the University of Washington system did away with the ABCD concept entirely. The +/- system appealed to those on the Committee who graded essay type papers and exams more than the other systems. The +/- system is used in five of the PAC-10 schools and was adopted at Washington State after the University of Washington system was rejected by the Faculty Senate at Washington State.

Appendix C

Experiment on +/- Grade Modifiers

EXTENDED EXECUTIVE SUMMARY -- MIT

After discussions beginning in the 1992-1993 academic year along with discussions with various parts of the MIT community and a survey of students and faculty on grading policy and grading systems, the Committee on Academic Performance (CAP) proposed a change in the Institute grading system allowing the use of the modifiers of + and - to the grades of A, B, and C. In consultation with the Committee on the Undergraduate Program (CUP), the Committee on Graduate School Policy (CGSP), and the Faculty Policy Committee (FPC), a three-year experiment on the use of intermediate grades (i.e. the use of + and - modifiers on the grades of A, B, and C) was approved and subsequently endorsed by the faculty in April 1995. This three-year time period was later extended to a fourth year to allow complete consideration of the data and opinions of the community.

The *ad hoc* CUP Subcommittee on Intermediate Grades was assembled to oversee all facets of this experiment, evaluate the effects of the grading policy on the MIT community, and provide a final report and recommendation on the issue of intermediate grades. This is the extended executive summary of the final report of the subcommittee. This is provided as background to the introduction of the pertinent motion to amend the Faculty Rules and Regulations in line with:

the unanimous recommendation of the subcommittee to make the current experimental internal use of + and - modifiers permanent

as endorsed by CUP and FPC. The full report will be available prior to the Faculty Meeting where the vote on the motion will be taken.

The evaluation of the effects of the experimental grading policy on the MIT community involved several facets. One, data on the grades issued on a term-by-term basis including terms prior to the introduction of +/- modifiers was obtained through the Registrar's office and examined based on a number of factors. Two, the use of the grades in end-of-term actions regarding academic performance of students was assessed via surveys of undergraduate and graduate registration officers and discussions with the CAP and CGSP. Three, the general attitudes of students and faculty towards the use of intermediate grades were assessed via discussions with a number of student groups and by an extensive survey of all students and faculty in the fall of 1997 (participation rate of 26% of the undergraduate students, 14% of the graduate students, and 31% of the faculty). In addition, data on the practice of other colleges and universities was acquired.

Over the three-year period, the subcommittee identified five key questions pertinent to evaluating the experiment. These were based on the original work of the CAP, the charge to the subcommittee by the CUP, discussions with various

parts of the community, and internal subcommittee discussions. These five questions are:

1. What are the overall statistics on grade distributions, the effects on term and overall GPA's (individual and average), and usage of the +/- modifiers?
2. How do faculty and students utilize grades as feedback and information mechanisms?
3. How do students utilize internal grades (specifically, are external uses made)?
4. What is the effect on perceived student pressure and how do students react?
5. Do faculty feel they have sufficient information to grade with the level of fidelity represented by + and - modifiers?

Assessment of these questions was accomplished within the context of considering three overall grading systems: one, the usual letter grades without modifiers; two, the usual letter grades with + and - modifiers reported only *internally*; and three, the usual letter grades with + and - modifiers reported both *internally* and *externally* and thereby leading to answering the overall question of: "Which grading system do parts of the community prefer?"

The survey was assembled to help answer these questions and the data on grades was examined with these in mind. Based on these results, the following answers emerged.

1. *What are the overall statistics on grade distributions, the effects on term and overall GPA's (individual and average), and usage of the +/- modifiers?*

The faculty make substantial use of the + and - modifiers and the utilization of these modifiers has negligible effects on grade distributions and on term and cumulative averages on both overall and individual bases. In particular, the addition of the + and - modifiers did not result in any discernible change in the overall grade distributions, within the categories of A, B, C, D, and F, as compared to distributions before the introduction of the modifiers. After the introduction of the modifiers, the distribution of grades including categories with the modifiers was consistent from term

Table 1 Effect of + and - modifiers on undergraduate student overall GPA's
(+ and - modifiers equated to 0.33 points)

GPA Group	% down (0.1 point)	% no change	% up (0.1 point)
< 3.5	34	62	4
3.5-4.0	44	53	3
4.0-4.5	29	63	8
4.5-5.0	33	66	1
TOTAL	33	63	4

to term. Student GPA's on a term and cumulative basis were relatively unaffected with an overall average decrease in 0.05 of a point across all students during the three-year period. This is shown for the case of undergraduate students in Table 1. Finally, faculty made use of the modifiers in 75% to 80% of the undergraduate subjects and 55% to 60% of the graduate subjects.

2. *How do faculty and students utilize grades as feedback and information mechanisms?*

Over 70% of the students and 85% of the faculty find that the + and - modifiers provide better feedback to the students. In regard to advising, 76% of the faculty feel that the addition of the modifiers helps advisors in evaluating student progress, while students agree with this assessment though not as strongly. Finally, although only 19% of the faculty report that departmental end-of-term academic actions are affected by the use of the modifiers, the members of the CAP report keeping in mind the + and - modifiers when making decisions in the end-of-term meetings.

3. *How do students utilize internal grades (specifically, are external uses made)?*

Based on the results of the survey, 90 to 95% of both undergraduate and graduate students report not making external uses of the + and - modifiers. This includes potential uses such as on graduate school and scholarship applications, as well as in applications for jobs, coops, and internships. Similarly, students have been asked by external sources for such information at a rate of only 5%.

4. *What is the effect on perceived student pressure and how do students react?*

The answer to this question was sought in terms of the effects of using + and - modifiers in internal and external modes as compared to having no such modifiers. Three key effects examined were the potentials for an increase in academic pressure and stress, a greater emphasis on grades than on learning, and an increase in competition and a lessening of cooperation amongst peers. The student and faculty perceptions in these regards were dramatically different for both internal and external uses of the + and - modifiers as can be seen in Figures 1 and 2. In the case of the internal use, the overall student perception is moderately negative in all three categories while faculty generally perceived no effects. Both the student and faculty indicated an increase in those who perceived negative effects if the + and - modifiers were used in an external fashion with over 90% of the undergraduate students anticipating an increase in academic pressure while only 34% of the faculty anticipate such an increase.

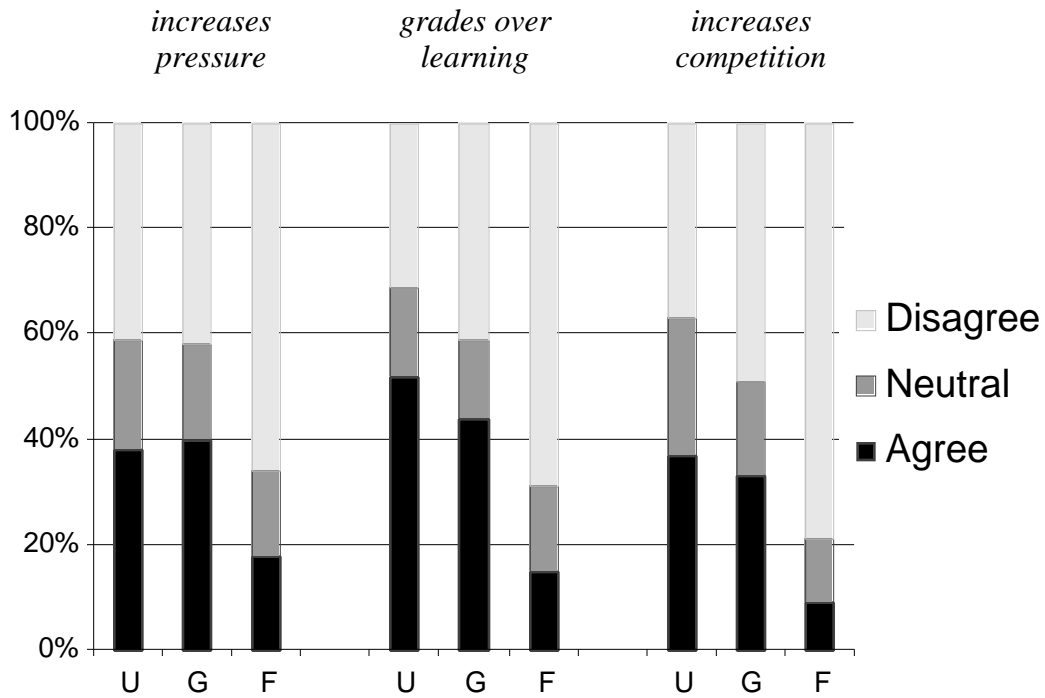


Figure 1 Perception of effects of *internal* use of +/- modifiers on students (U=Undergraduate Students, G=Graduate Students, F=Faculty)

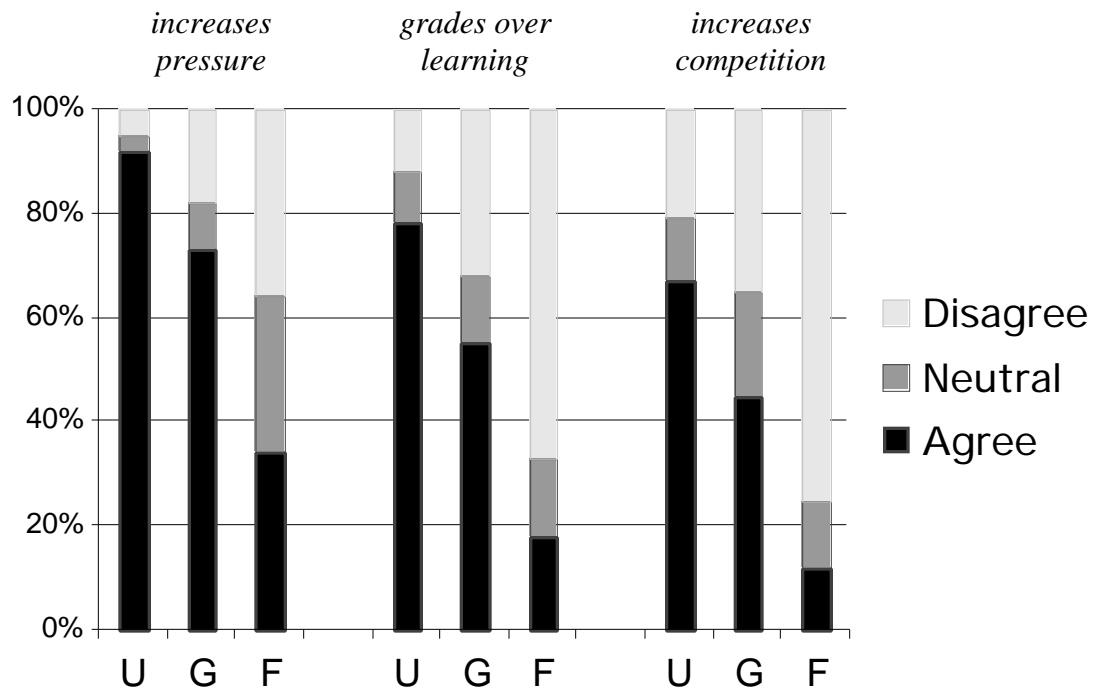


Figure 2 Perception of effects of *external* use of +/- modifiers on students (U=Undergraduate Students, G=Graduate Students, F=Faculty)

5. Do faculty feel they have sufficient information to grade with the level of fidelity represented by + and - modifiers?

Over 90% of the faculty feel that they have sufficient information to grade with the level of fidelity provided with the use of + and - modifiers. Students generally agree with this with 64% of the undergraduate students and 71% of the graduate students feeling that their instructors can make a more accurate assessment of their performance with the modifiers while only 17% of each student group disagreeing with this.

This leads to answering the overall question of “Which grading system do parts of the community prefer?”. The results of the survey shown in Figure 3 clearly indicate that both sets of students and the faculty prefer the use of + and - modifiers as opposed to returning to the previous system of straight letter grades. However, there is clear difference in opinion as to whether these grades with modifiers should be reported only internally or externally as well with undergraduate students clearly favoring internal use, graduate students somewhat favoring internal use, and faculty somewhat favoring external use. Of additional significance is the very clear unfavorable opinion that nearly 80% of the undergraduate students have for the external use of such modifiers.

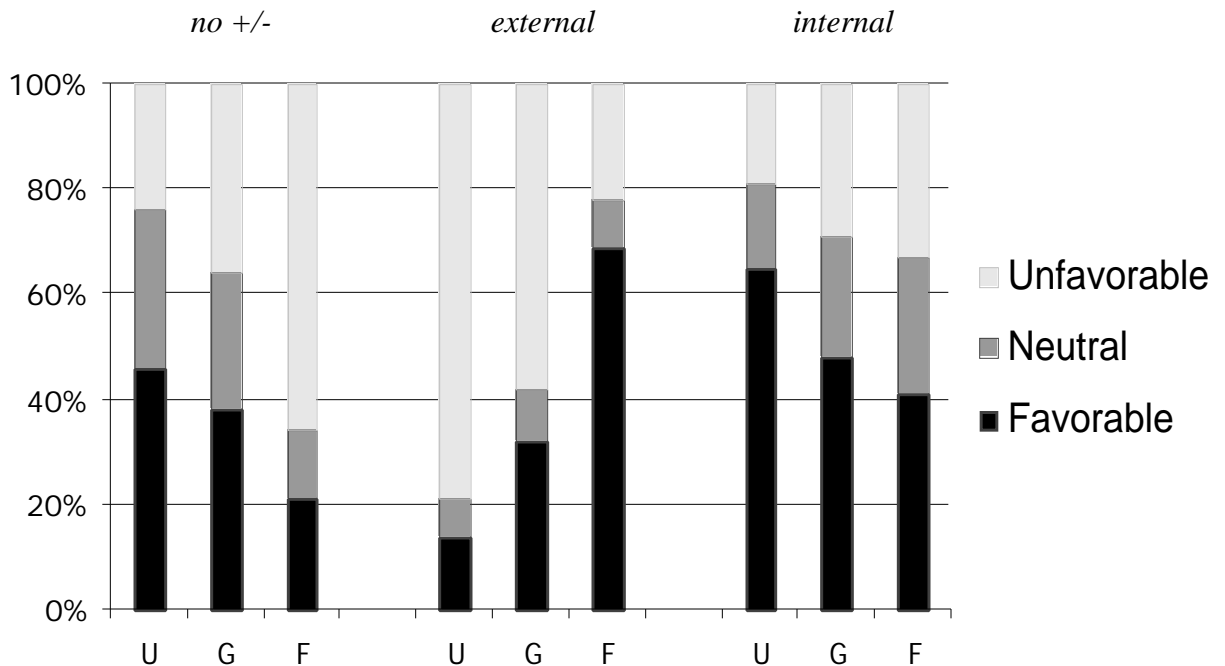


Figure 3 Community opinion on desirability of grading systems (U=Undergraduate Students, G=Graduate Students, F=Faculty)

The input from the community, assessment of the statistics on the grades with and without + and - modifiers, and the consideration of the key questions and the answers which emerged, leads the subcommittee to the following four-point reasoning:

1. The use of + and - modifiers minimally affects grade distributions and GPA's.
2. There are clear advantages, most importantly feedback of student performance to students and faculty, to the continued use of the modifiers.
3. These advantages are attainable whether the modifiers are used internally or externally .
4. The perceived negative effects on students indicate that the extension of the use of the modifiers to external reporting is not warranted.

The subcommittee therefore ***unanimously recommends*** making the current experimental internal use of + and - modifiers permanent.

Respectfully submitted,
the *ad hoc* CUP Subcommittee
on Intermediate Grades

Hugo Ayala, CGSP Student representative
Michael Kenstowicz, CGSP Faculty representative
Paul Lagace, *chair*, CUP Faculty representative
Alberta Lipson, Academic Services and Support
Ole Madsen, CAP Faculty representative
Hansie Mathelier '98, CAP Student representative
Ri Romano, Academic Services and Support

March, 1999

Appendix D

Evaluation of Effect of the Plus/Minus Grading System: A Computer Model

Rick Matthews, February 4, 1997

Effect of the change on student grade point averages

The first computer simulation examined effects of the “plus/minus” grading system proposed on student grade point averages (GPA). The “plus/minus” system modeled is the one proposed to the Committee on Academic Affairs in September by Page Laughlin, Rick Matthews, and Claudia Thomas. The results of a typical simulation are shown in the first accompanying graph, “Change in GPA under plus/minus system vs. Old GPA.” This graph displays the change students can expect in their GPA from the switch from the current system to the new system.

Description of the model

Students are assumed to be graded on a 100 point scale with a 10 point spacing between letter grades. The model assumes that each student’s performance across courses is normally distributed with a standard deviation of three points on this scale. Students with average raw scores ranging from 50 to 100 were simulated. The model calculates each student’s GPA under the current system and under the proposed plus/minus system.

Discussion

- Nearly all students (those with grade point averages between 1.0 to 3.6), will see a change in GPA of less than ± 0.06 . The change is small because the benefit of the “plus” grades almost exactly balances the penalty of the “minus” grades.
- Students with GPA’s around 0.6, well below our standards for continuation, will see their grades hurt by about 0.12. These poorly performing students receive more grades of D– than D+.
- Students with a very high GPA of around 3.9 will see a decrease of as much as 0.08. They will on occasion receive an A–, whereas now they receive almost all As. Fewer students will achieve a 4.0 under the proposed system.

Thus, there will be little effect of student grade point averages.

Effects of errors in assigned grades

The next study examined the errors in the grades reported to the registrar as a result of inaccurate assessment by the instructor of student performance. Some faculty have expressed skepticism of the value of a plus/minus system, stating that they cannot assess student performance more accurately than to the nearest letter grade. Therefore, it is appropriate to investigate whether there is any substantial benefit to adopting a grading scale that may be of higher resolution than the accuracy of the assessment of students by their instructors.

This computer simulation assumes the same grading system as the previous study (100 point scaled, 10 point spacing between letter grades). It also assumes that the errors in the instructor's assessments of student performance are normally distributed with a standard deviation of 3 points on the 100 point scale. Thus, the raw score the instructor determines on a 100 point scale is assumed to be within 6 points of the student's true performance, 95% of the time. If the student deserves a score of 85, the instructor is assumed to award the student a score between 79 and 91, 95% of the time.

The results of this simulation are displayed in the second graph, RMS error in assigned grade points vs. raw grade. This graph summarizes a computer simulation of the consequences of the errors that instructors make in evaluating student performance. Displayed is the root mean square (RMS) difference between the grade points assigned by the instructor and the grade points the students should have received had the instructor been perfectly discerning of student performance. The RMS error is calculated for a group of students whose performances warranted grades ranging from 50 to 100.

The graph illustrates that, under the current system, the RMS error in the assigned grades is typically between about 0.3 and 0.7. The largest errors occur for students close to the cutoff between letter grades, as expected. Students who should have earned an 81 (and therefore a B) are assigned a C almost half the time under the current system. Similarly, students who should have earned a 79 and a C are assigned a B almost half the time. For borderline students, the reported grade is wrong almost half the time. When the wrong grade is assigned, the awarded grade is in error by a full grade point.

Under the new system, the RMS error in assigned grade points is between 0.3 and 0.33 for most students. For students who earn raw grades above 68, the largest RMS error under the plus/minus system is less than half of what is seen under the current system. While instructors will be just as inaccurate in their assessment of students under the proposed system, the effects of their errors on student grade points are much smaller. A student who should have earned an 81 and therefore a B- may instead receive a C+ or B; however, these grades carry only small differences (0.333) in grade points assigned from the proper grade of B-.

Thus, reported grades will be more accurate reflections of student performance under the proposed plus/minus system, even if faculty can grade with only an accuracy of one letter grade. Rounding inaccurate grades to the nearest letter grade increases inaccuracy.

Limitations of this study

Many courses do not use a grading system that bears much resemblance to a 100 point scale. Of those that do, many do not use the assumed 10 point spacing between letter grades. However, nearly all grading systems can be mapped onto such a scale, though often with some skewing of grade distributions.

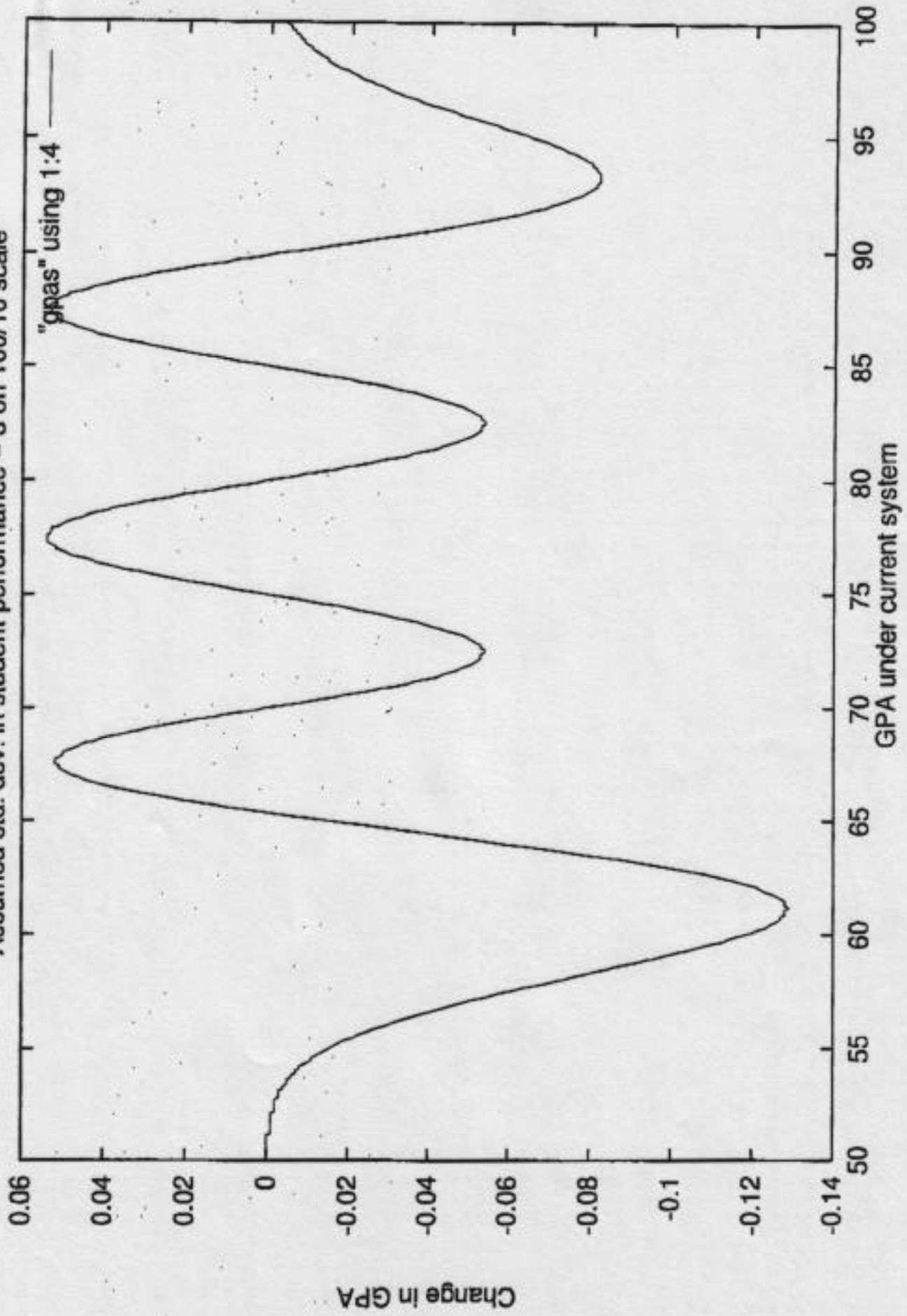
There is little basis for the assumption that student performance in courses is normally distributed with a standard deviation of three points. To assess the importance of this assumption, other simulations were conducted with distributions of differing shape and width. The findings reported here are rather insensitive to both the detailed shape and width of the distribution.

Similarly, little basis exists for the assumed distribution of errors in assessment of student performance. However, the findings regarding errors in student assessment are even less sensitive to the shape and width of the distribution of errors. In particular, the maximum predicted RMS error in assigned grade points is consistently much higher under the current system than under the proposed plus/minus system.

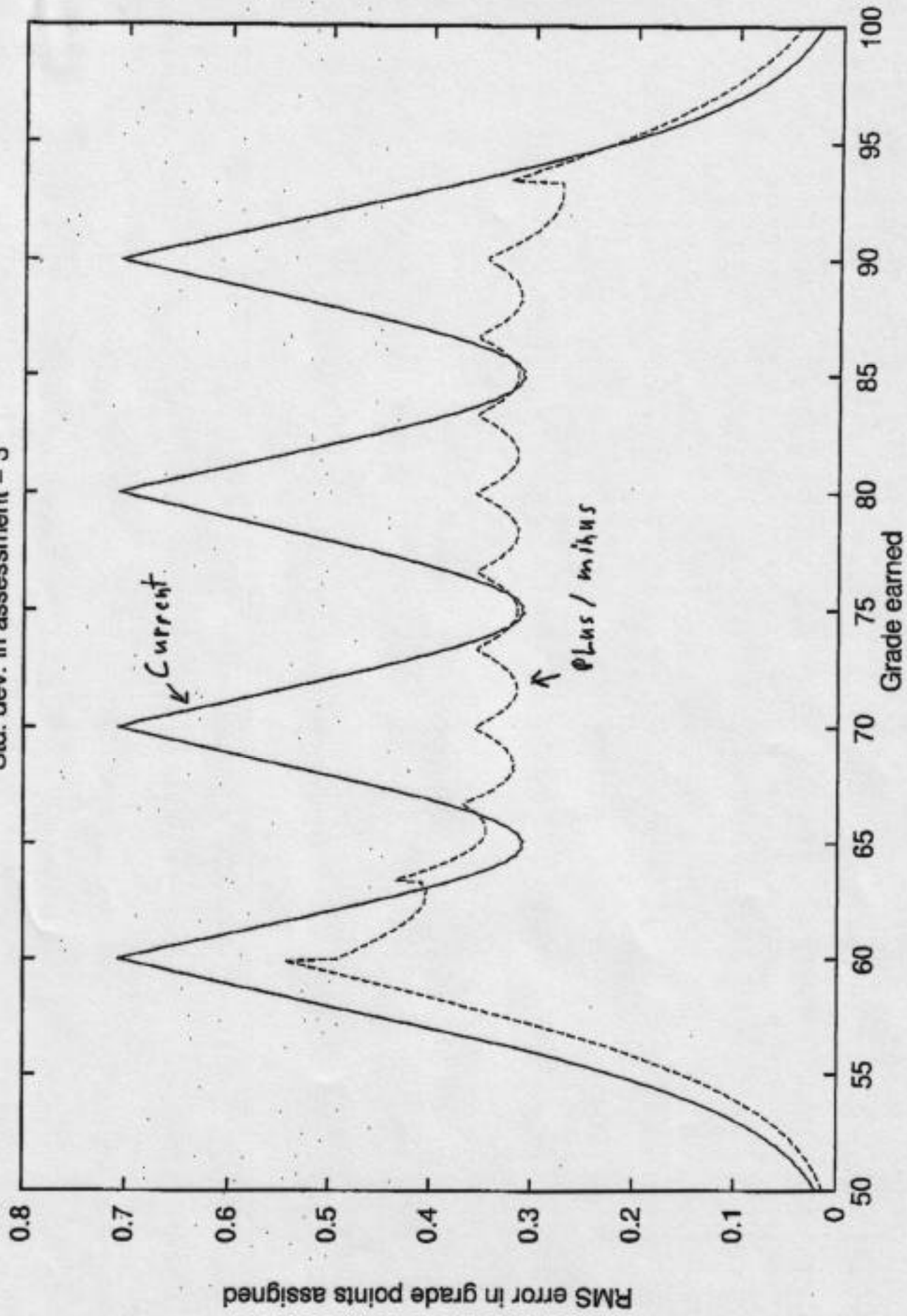
Summary

Results of computer simulations indicated that adopting the proposed plus/minus system will have little net effect on student grade point averages. However, reported grades will be more accurate reflections of student performance under the proposed plus/minus system.

Assumed std. dev. in student performance = 3 on 100/10 scale



Std. dev. in assessment = 3



Appendix E

MEMORANDUM

TO: George Watson, Chair—Ad Hoc Committee on Plus/Minus Grades

FROM: Jerry Kingston, Faculty Athletic Representative

RE: Plus and Minus Grades

DATE: April 7, 2002

George: At your invitation, I am writing to express some of my thoughts related to a change in our grading system to provide for plus and minus grades. We had briefly discussed this matter at the Intercollegiate Athletics Board meeting last week, and I do believe there are some implications for academic eligibility certification for intercollegiate athletics that merit consideration.

Let me indicate from the outset, however, that I do not have strong personal feelings about the introduction of a plus and minus grading system. If we decide to implement such a change, I may or may not choose to use the + or - notations on the grade reports for my classes. (This assumes, of course, that each professor will have the option to use, or not to use, the new system.) I do, however, wish to offer two sets of comments about the introduction of such a system. The first relates solely to the context within which these changes are being contemplated. The second relates directly to my responsibilities as Faculty Athletics Representative.

The context of the present discussion about increased precision in the awarding of grades merits some consideration. It seems at least curious to me, as a faculty member, that we are considering widening the range of grades to be assigned by faculty members, while apparently paying much less attention to the broader issue of grade inflation. While I have no specific evidence to present at this time, it is my belief that the average grade in undergraduate courses has increased far more rapidly than the academic admissions profile of our entering classes. There are, of course, many reasons why the average grade in our undergraduate courses may be increasing, but my interactions with undergraduate students suggests that they are more demanding about their grades than has been the case in the past. Busy faculty members appear to be more willing to honor requests for grade changes than to engage in any appeals process which constitutes, in their minds, a distraction from more important work. Recent paradigms which emphasize that our undergraduate students are our "customers" may contribute to such student expectations for better grades as well, but I am sure that numerous factors are involved. Overall, however, I would think that the overall issue of the level of grades being awarded would

be of greater interest and concern to faculty than attempts to provide for increased precision of the grading options available to faculty.

My concerns about the proposed changes to the grading system stem primarily from my responsibilities as Faculty Athletics Representative. Both the NCAA and the Arizona Board of Regents impose GPA requirements for eligibility for athletics competition. These rules presently require that a student-athlete have a cumulative GPA of 1.80 at the beginning of the third year of collegiate enrollment, a 1.90 at the beginning of the fourth year of collegiate enrollment, and a 2.00 at the beginning of the academic year in which the student-athlete will be utilizing his or her final season of competition. ABOR policy requires that these rules be administered on a semester by semester basis. The NCAA currently is considering raising these requirements so that student-athletes would be required to have a 1.80 cumulative GPA after the freshman year, and a 2.00 cumulative GPA after the end of the sophomore year. These new rules are almost certainly will be approved by the NCAA during the next academic year. Using the requirement of a 2.00 requirement as the simplest example, it is quite clear that student-athletes currently understand that they must maintain a C average in order to be eligible. Under the proposed changes in the grading system, however, a C average with only a single C-grade (and no C+ grades) would cause a student-athlete to be ineligible under the 2.00 rule. This is the case, as you know, because a grade of C- would carry less than two quality points under the revised grading system. Now, I understand that all students, not just student-athletes, would have to adjust to the new grading standards, but student-athletes are almost in a separate category from all other undergraduate students because of externally-imposed (and rising) GPA requirements that must be administered on a term by term basis. I believe that it will be confusing to student-athletes who almost certainly will be required to adjust to increasing GPA requirements for competition at the same time that we are changing the way GPAs are calculated. Either increased ineligibility for competition, or increased pressures on faculty to change grades, or both, are likely to result.

In fact, my greatest concern, relates to the integrity of the grading system that ultimately will be applied to student-athletes. Because eligibility for competition depends on achieving progressively increasing cumulative GPA requirements, the costs to a student-athlete of not achieving the required minimum are very high. In sports like men's and women's basketball, for example, student-athletes may utilize a season of competition by participating in contests during the fall semester and then learn that they have become ineligible to continue their participation during the spring semester segment of their sport because of low cumulative GPAs at the end of the fall term. The NCAA does not provide for any additional seasons or competition, or opportunities to compete, when such problems develop. In these circumstances, ineligible student-athletes may approach their professors to obtain changes in the grades originally assigned. It is important to note that student-athletes have the same rights as all other students to request a review of their grades by their professors. What is problematic is the basis upon which grade changes may occur. NCAA extra benefit legislation prohibits grade changes for student-athletes based on their status as student-athletes, but "friendly" or "caring" or "busy" professors sometimes are willing to accommodate such requests. For this reason, grade changes for

student-athletes are reported by the Office of the Registrar to the FAR office. I review such changes and contact the appropriate "Deans Designee" in the appropriate college if I believe some follow up (verification of the basis for the grade change) is required. I would especially be inclined to pursue such a follow up if the grade change caused the student-athlete to become eligible for competition, or if a pattern of grade changes across several colleges was observed. These follow up measures are essential to preserve the academic integrity of our intercollegiate athletics program.

My concerns about revised grading system stem from the fact that such requests for grade changes may now involve only the elimination of a minus grade or the addition of a plus grade to the same letter grade already assigned. I believe that such subtle grade changes will be much more likely to be granted by faculty and will receive much less scrutiny in Department and College offices before they are posted by the Registrar's office. I believe that the number of requests for grade changes will increase and that there will be less oversight of the reasons cited by the faculty for such changes. Under such conditions, the oversight responsibilities assigned to the FAR office will become even more difficult to carry out.

IF the grading system is to be revised, I would prefer a system in which plus or minus grades were assigned on grade reports and appeared on the student's transcript without any changes in the number of quality points assigned. The obvious result would be that faculty could use the increased precision implied by the new grading system, but student cumulative GPAs would not be affected. IF the Academic Senate decides to move forward with this proposal, this is the version that I would most prefer.

George, I hope that these comments will prove helpful to you and the committee charged with making a recommendation to the Academic Senate. Please understand that the FAR office will make every effort to promote the academic integrity of our intercollegiate athletics program no matter which grading system is selected.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss these matters further.

Appendix F

MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Senate
FROM: Michael Dickson
Senior Associate Director, Undergraduate Admissions
DATE: April 11, 2002
SUBJECT: Plus/Minus Grades

I understand that the Academic Senate has requested a re-review of the resolution that provided for the addition of plus/minus grades to our current grade scale of A through E. I was approached by Dr. George Watson to provide any concerns or thoughts that might be helpful in this review process. My concerns/thoughts are below.

1. To implement any change to our grading scale will require considerable resources from the academic, administrative, and most importantly information technology units. The resources that these units will expend implementing a change to the grading scale will mean that other projects will not be done or will at the very least be delayed. It is therefore extremely important that we ensure that we are implementing a change that will move the university forward and/or solve some problem that the university is experiencing. This is where my concern comes in, I am not sure that I understand how a change to our current grading scale will either move the university forward to what problem we are trying to solve.
2. Currently, our Degree Audit Reporting System, DARS, and the Student Information System, SIS, use the capability built into them of a +/- grading system for courses/credit that we accept in transfer to ASU from other institutions. The scale that is used in these systems is A+/A=4.0, A-+3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0, B-=2.7, C+=2.3, etc. If we decide to change to a +/- system at ASU, implementation of that system to include ease of explanation to students, parents, and all of our other constituents would be much easier if we used the same conversion practices in all of our systems for the calculation of GPAs.
3. Based on current transfer policy, ASU does not allow courses/credit in transfer from other institutions "in which the lowest passing grade ('D') or a failing grade was received." The quotation is from our General Catalog. When this policy was put in place this precluded any course/credit to transfer for which the student received a grade below a "C"/2.00 because ASU does not have any grade between a "C" and a "D". If we change our scale to allow a grade to exist between a "C" and a "D", this policy needs to be revisited to determine if the faculty want to allow a course/credit in which the student received a grade that is below a "C"/2.00 to be transferred to ASU.

Table 1. Various Grading Systems of ASU Peers, PAC-10 Schools, and Others

System 1		System 2		System 3		System 4		System 5		System 6		System 7		System 8	
A	4.0	A+ A A-	4.0 4.0 4.0	A+ A A-	4.00 4.00 3.67	A+ A A-	4.33 4.00 3.67	A A-	4.00 3.67	A A-	4.00 3.67	A A-	4.00 3.67	A	4.0
B	3.0	B+ B B-	3.0 3.0 3.0	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B	3.5 3.0
C	2.0	C+ C C-	2.0 2.0 2.0	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C	2.33 2.00	C+ C	2.5 2.0
D	1.0	D+ D D-	1.0 1.0 1.0	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00	D	1.00	D	1.0
E	0.0	E	0.0	E+ E	0.33 0.00	E	0.00	E+ E	0.33 0.00	E	0.00	E	0.00	E	0.0
ASU Arizona NAU Oklahoma Texas U Ill.-Chicago Kansas (varies)		Maryland MIT +/- grades appear on transcripts but do not affect gpa calculations		UCLA UC-Berkeley Missouri-no E+ Nebraska-no E+		Iowa Oregon Stanford North Carolina State		Cincinnati Colorado Connecticut Kansas (varies) USC Iowa State Florida State ¹ Ore. St.-no E+ Temple-no E+ Washington ²		Ohio State Wash. State Minnesota (±.333) ASU (Resolution 23, 1992)		Penn State		Rutgers <hr/> Some schools use ± 0.3; others ± 0.33; some ± 0.333. Florida and Rutgers do otherwise.	

1. Florida State uses increments and decrements of 0.25. Thus, an A- is 3.25 while B+ is 3.25.

2. The University of Washington grades by 0.1 points and then assigns letter values. As A is 3.9-4.0, A- is 3.5-3.8, etc.

Academic Senate Summary
Monday, February 24, 2003
Great Hall, College of Law
3:15 – 5:00 p.m.

Present: Aldama, Allen, Alozie, Baldini, Ball, Barr, Bartlett, Blacklock, Bolin, Booksh, Burns, Burstein, Butler, Chen, Comfort, Craft, Crozier, Damrel, Davis, Dwyer, Edelsky, Fiori, Fouquette, Fowler, Garcia, Glick, Gully, Gustavsson, Happel, Haynes, Hirata, Humble, Hurdle, Ismeurt, Jacobs, Johnson, Karady, Keim, Keuter, Komnenich, Kopta, Koshinsky, Krus, Landers (Dan), Landers (Donna), Lattouf, Leingang, Leshowitz, Lowenthal, Lynch, Lyons, Mattson, Mayer, McDermott, Mulhern, Mulvihill, Munk, Park-Fuller, Pickus, Patterson, Ray, Rice, Santos de Barona, Siferd, Swan, Thornton, Tipton, Trotta, Tsakalis, Watson, Webb, Williams, Witt, Yabes

Substitutes: Maria Allison for Bianca Bernstein, Misty Calleroz for James Rund, Karen Leong for Lisa Anderson

Senators Absent (*) indicates with prior notice: Acker, Alford, Alozie, Baker, Bird, Booth, Boyes, Britton*, Burg*, Clark, Dantico, Danzig, Dorman, Fafitis, Falconer, Golshani, Grossman, Guleserian, Harrison, Hejduk*, Moorhead*, Post, Rivers, Rollins, Rolstad, Segal, Smith (A), Smith (H), Stahl, Timothy, Turney, Wagner, Ward, Wilkinson, Williamson, Wilson, Yao*, Zeng

Guests: Clarice Deal (Languages and Literatures), Julie Fleury (Nursing), Daniel Jankowski (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering), Clark Presson (Psychology), Ricardo Vasquez (ASASU Student Senator, COB)

1. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order by Senate President George Watson at 3:21 p.m.

President Watson: We have a very full agenda today as you all know, and we have decided to take things a little bit differently than we normally do. We have listed the unfinished business before the announcements and reports. This was done because we will take up the final discussion of the issue of plus minus grades, and other issues of unfinished business at the beginning of the meeting. Hearing no objections, we will move on.

2. Approval of the Previous Minutes (January 27, 2003).

The Academic Senate minutes of January 27, 20003, were posted on the Academic Senate Web page and emailed to every senator before the meeting. The minutes were approved as circulated. Further corrections should be addressed to darby.shaw@asu.edu.

3. Unfinished Business.

3.A Executive Committee (George Watson).

3.A.1 Senate Resolution #2 (2002-2003) (Second Reading) regarding the report of the Plus Minus Grades Committee (The resolution was emailed to senators along with supporting document links prior to the meeting and posted on the Academic Senate Web page). Senate President Watson called everyone's attention to a blue sheet, and white sheet, in their agenda packet. The blue sheet is Senate Resolution #2 from the ad hoc committee and the white sheet is the substitute motion that will be offered later on in the meeting.

Summarizing for the Senate, President Watson said that the report of the ad hoc committee has been posted on the Senate Web page for some time. The ad hoc committee met and was created last spring by then Senate President Mort Munk. The Committee met on at least a half dozen occasions and they heard testimony and collected information from a number of university officials and students who would be affected by any changes in the grading system. The meetings were also open for others who wanted to come and comment to the committee. The committee did a lot of background research, produced a table that is approximately 15 pages with an appendix of about 15 pages as well, and they looked at a number of different systems around the country. There is a table that was produced from that study, which a lot of people have worked with (below).

System 1		System 2		System 3		System 4		System 5		System 6		System 7		System 8	
A	4.0	A+ A A-	4.0 4.0 4.0	A+ A A-	4.00 4.00 3.67	A+ A A-	4.33 4.00 3.67	A A-	4.00 3.67	A A-	4.00 3.67	A A-	4.00 3.67	A	4.0
B	3.0	B+ B B-	3.0 3.0 3.0	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B B-	3.33 3.00 2.67	B+ B	3.5 3.0
C	2.0	C+ C C-	2.0 2.0 2.0	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C C-	2.33 2.00 1.67	C+ C	2.33 2.00	C+ C	2.5 2.0
D	1.0	D+ D D-	1.0 1.0 1.0	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D+ D D-	1.33 1.00 0.67	D	1.00	D	1.0
E	0.0	E	0.0	E+ E	0.33 0.00	E	0.00	E+ E	0.33 0.00	E	0.00	E	0.00	E	0.0
ASU Arizona NAU Oklahoma Texas U Ill.- Chicago Kansas (varies)		Maryland MIT +/- grades appear on transcripts but do not affect gpa calculations		UCLA UC- Berkeley Missouri- no E+ Nebraska- no E+		Iowa Oregon Stanford North Carolina State		Cincinnati Colorado Connecticut Kansas (varies) USC Iowa State Florida State ¹ Ore. St.-no E+ Temple-no E+ Washington ²		Ohio State Wash. State Minnesota (±.333) ASU (Resolution 23, 1992)		Penn State		Rutgers Some schools use ± 0.3; others ± 0.33; some ± 0.333. Florida and Rutgers do otherwise.	

1. Florida State uses increments and decrements of 0.25. Thus, an A– is 3.25 while B+ is 3.25.
2. The University of Washington grades by 0.1 points and then assigns letter values. As A is 3.9–4.0, A– is 3.5–3.8, etc.

What the committee produced was a system, and you should have had this table available to you, on the Senate Web page that contains 8 different grading systems. ASU currently falls under grading system number 1, which has no plus or minus grades. The original plus minus proposal was made in 1992 (and distributed to senators before this meeting). It was for a system that was similar to system 6 in our table. The committee debated different systems and debated different points. You are probably familiar with some of the various arguments by now that have been made, or that have been brought forward and called to your attention by the committee. The committee felt in particular that there would be potential difficulties with plus minus that should at least be considered before making a decision to adopt one of the systems.

Among the changes or the problems that they cited was a potential problem with the C- grade of giving a 1.67 or a 1.667 depending on how far you carry it out, which posed some problems for the standards of ASU that call for having a C or better grade in your major in order to be considered passing, and also at the same time a 2.0 or better for academic standing. What this would mean is that people could get C- grades in some of their courses and C's in some of their courses but not come up to a 2.0. They would be in the position of having had grades in a C range but yet still not be able to graduate. The committee thought that was a problem and one that should be attended to. You may not agree, but it at least needs to be recognized.

On the opposite end, the committee also felt that for certain students who are at the upper end of the grade point average, near 3.9 or 4.0 (summa cum laude)—there would be fewer students able to retain that grade level. Some would welcome that and say we have perhaps too many at that level. Others think that perhaps that should not be the case. The reason that would happen is because there is no A+ grade that awards more than a 4.0. A couple of schools do have such a system where they give 4.3s; Stanford is one, and that system is in the table too but not many others do that. That of course creates an anomaly where you have a grade point higher than a 4.0. There are a lot of people who don't like that and some who are willing to tolerate something like that. On those two points of extremity, the thoughts of the committee are anchored.

Before I open up the Senate Resolution to further discussion or debate, let me just ask any committee members if I have overlooked anything in the report that I should have mentioned to the Senate?

Senator Ball: You might mention something about transfer students from junior colleges that presently don't have plus minus systems in place.

President Watson: If ASU adopted the plus minus system, it would be the only system in Arizona that has plus minus grades. I don't recall exactly what the committee was saying in terms of transfer student problems.

Senator Ball: We had thought it would be difficult because if you have an A- student transferring into your college, what does he get—a B, a B+--how do we know if he is a B+ when there is no plus minus system here.

President Watson: Your concern was about not knowing how to transfer these students in--Are there any other committee members who wish to comment on this?

Senator Ball: I would like to add that a number of honors students have complained that their grades are going to be depressed under this proposed system 6.

President Watson: I think that point was made by the honors students previously. There is some question whether or not the grade points at the 3.5 level and above would actually be affected. My sense was from looking at the data that there is no reason to expect a particular decrease for the plus minus system of 3.5 or higher. The 3.5 is important because it is a threshold for maintaining scholarships, and there is some suggestion that the ability to have B+ grades in fact would enhance some students standing, and would move them higher in that mid-3 point range. That is what some of the evidence that the committee reported seemed to suggest. Is there any other thing we need to talk about on the committee report before we open up the discussion? The committee recommended Senate Resolution #2 and the committee also made a recommendation that we do not change grading systems, that we maintain a system which does not have pluses or minuses.

Because the committee wanted to construct a system that did in fact show plus minus grades, they proposed Senate Resolution #2 (blue sheet), which suggests (shown on the overhead) a system whereby plus minus grades would be reported on transcripts but would not change the way that GPAs are calculated. An A+, A, and A- would all have 4.0, a B+, B, and B- would all have 3.0 and a C+, C, and C- would all have 2.0. This is a system that is used in a couple of places and it is also the one that the committee recommends. Now, I believe we are ready to open debate.

Senator Johnson: Mister President, members of the Senate, I would ask you to consider the Substitute Amendment (white sheet) at this time, which would record plus or minus grades; it adopts in effect the system #7. My belief is that we do not have enough grading alternatives and that grading alternatives are related to the motivation of students who do the work in a course.

President Watson: It has been moved by Senator Johnson and seconded by Senator Mayer that there be a substitution made for Resolution #2; copies have been provided to all the senators. Thanks very much for providing this in typed format. What is on the white sheet in front of you is a substitute amendment to replace Senate Resolution #2 (blue sheet). You will notice that it has a couple of differences in the whereas clauses, but the basic difference in the action part of the clause is that you do have plus minus grades, of course, but that it also counts in the grade point, as you can see in item number 4 (below).

**Substitute Amendment to Senate Motion #2 of January 27, 2003
(February 24, 2003)**

**Senate Resolution #2
(January 27, 2003)**

Whereas the curriculum and maintenance of academic standards is the shared responsibility of the faculty at ASU;

Whereas the faculty at ASU desire to have a grading system that permits truer records of student performance;

Whereas the faculty recognize that most of its peer institutions have adopted a grading system that permits plus and minus grades;

Whereas the faculty wish to implement a grading system that will serve as an incentive to students for better performance;

Be it resolved:

- (1) That Senate Resolution #23 of 1991-1992, establishing a plus/minus grade system for ASU, be rescinded;**
- (2) That the grading system at Arizona State University be changed for both undergraduate and graduate courses to replace the current grade options of A, B, C, D, and E with the following grade options: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, D, and E.**
- (3) That these grade options will be duly recorded on a student's transcript;**
- (4) That for purposes of calculating grade points, the following values will be used:**
 - A = 4.000**
 - A- = 3.667**
 - B+ = 3.333**
 - B = 3.000**
 - B- = 2.667**
 - C+ = 2.333**
 - C = 2.000**
 - D = 1.000**
 - E = 0.000**
- (5) That this policy will be printed in the next General Catalog, and that the plus/minus system will be made available to faculty for use with all students when that Catalog goes into effect.**

It does do the traditional .333 increments and decrements for plus grades and for minus grades. You will also notice that it stops with a C grade of 2.0. It does not have a C- grade. This is a system, again, if you have your table with you that is the Penn State model. Penn State implemented this system a couple of years ago. From reading the minutes of the Penn State Senate as they addressed this issue, as our committee did, they discussed the problem with C- grades.

The motion to substitute is now the question before the Senate, and once again we remain open for debate. Are there any questions?

Senator Siferd: Was the motion to substitute seconded?

President Watson: Yes, it was seconded. Did you wish to speak to it?

Senator Siferd: I know that my department is very much in favor of this model because of what Senator Johnson just said, that we do not have enough alternatives. Particularly at the MBA level. I support this resolution.

Senator Park-Fuller: Are we able to comment on any other issues?

President Watson: At the moment, the discussion is on the motion to substitute. However, any issues regarding plus minus grades can be talked about at this time.

Senator Pickus: I am in favor, I think, of the white paper substitute resolution.

President Watson: Just to clarify, the white sheet is the plus minus system that assigns the increments and decrements to grade point.

Senator Pickus: They mentioned a concern of honor students in their report, but I believe that the concern of the honors faculty has not been voiced yet. The Honors faculty feels very strongly that their consensus supports plus minus grades, and I can tell you that it is not just something that is a minor point in our teaching. It really makes a difference for us, the difference between a B, B+, A-, A. And beyond that, there is one more thing that I think that is going on. I wanted to draw some interest and attention to the feelings of students. One of my former students came today to the meeting and we talked previously about plus minus grades. He mentioned his anxiety that if we pass this system and implement it, the sum total of his performance will go down and he wants to be recognized to speak on this today. I emphatically believe that these kinds of anxieties among students should be acknowledged and addressed, but equally emphatically not by putting a less accurate grade system in place. It just does not make sense. There is always pressure in a class to make grades become something non-academic, a reward for being nice, something that will get one a career, or a punishment for being bad. But grades are not about that, grades are about accurate feedback on the student's academic performance and nothing but that. I was really not persuaded about any kind of conjecture that adding a plus minus system would be bad for ASU. That is simply speculation. What I think will be bad for ASU is when we send students a distorted message about what we are doing as faculty; when what we should be doing as faculty is telling them exactly what they are learning. So, I support the substitute resolution.

Senator Ball: Just a point of clarification, the previous speaker called the original resolution 2 a non-plus minus system and that is not quite true. Part 3, the second line says, that plus and minus grades will be recorded on the student's transcript. This is not a non-plus or minus grade system.

Senator Karady: We have to use an Excel sheet many times to calculate the grades; it means that the students gets some points for homework, test numbers, final test score—that means that at the end of the class each student gets a number, which is a decimal number. Now you have to convert this number to an A or B. Since I have only A, B, and C, so I must decide based on that collection of numbers what grade they will receive. Therefore, I believe the fact that we will have A-, B+, B, and B- will permit a finer grading, which in Engineering, .02 is a big advantage, however, I can see that a C- will generate a big mess, because the question will be whether the student is acceptable or not. In that respect, I would like to think it is an advantage that we have a finer grading system, but we should appropriately stop at C. However, I would like to point out this question, when we want to admit someone to graduate school, we generally require that they have above 3.0. I wonder will this system generate a problem, because the B- student will say, I have a B, I am qualified for the graduate program. So, I raise this question.

Senator Burstein: Two things, in reference to what you said Senator Ball. I believe that we are lying to the students if we adopt the first proposal. I think we are lying to the students because most of them do not even know how to calculate a GPA. If you give them the grades on their transcript, but do not give them on the GPA, in five years time all this Senate debate will be forgotten and the students will

think they are getting the advantage of plus and minus grades, when they are not. I refuse to vote for such a system.

Second, we now get most of our graduate students from schools that give plus or minus grades and their GPA reflects that. The vast majority of schools from which we admit graduate students give plus or minuses; they do not give integral grades. We are among the minority of schools that gives integral grades.

Senator Mayer: I also wanted to say, first of all, when I asked my faculty if they thought it would be useful to have plus minus grades, to a person, they were opposed to it. They did not see much purpose in doing plus minus grades unless they also had it added into the GPA.

Secondly, from my personal point of view, I have always been bothered by the degree of differences of people who receive B's in my classes, and the reason for that is because there is a great deal of discrepancy between the people who had the B+s and the people who had the B-s. On that particular level, I would like to be able to differentiate those conditions.

Senator Leingang: I am adamantly opposed to any plus minus grade system, but I will first address the substitute resolution to replace Senate Resolution #2, which actually includes calculating grade points with the plus minus system. My concern lies in C+. You get a 2.33, so basically you are rewarding an average student, whereas we are hurting a student who is excelling and attaining an A+. They would still only be able to pull a 4.0. That is my concern with the substitute resolution.

Another concern I have is with both of the proposed grade systems, especially for life science students. Myself specifically—it is almost impossible to attain an A in a class; there are mostly A- grades. Most of the grades are also based on 85 percent instead of 90. It is just so hard to attain an A in a life science course. We are putting students who are applying for graduate school, specifically law schools and medical schools, at a distinct disadvantage, especially from this state, because NAU and UofA do not use a plus minus system. I do not want my GPA to be hurt when I am applying to medical school, or my friend's GPA to be hurt, or for them to get passed over for a UofA or an NAU student, because they are not using plus minus grades in the GPA. I think that is something that we should take to heart and I am adamantly opposed to both systems. That represents the general consensus of all students on campus as well.

Senator Witt: For the last several years, my director has been spending some time at the end of each year looking at grade inflation in our school. He seems to be very concerned about that, but I personally believe that the plus minus system, if calculated into a student's GPA, might have a mitigating effect on grade inflation, therefore a more positive effect on the overall system of education, and it will also release my director to do other things.

Senator Gully: I polled the School of Art faculty and they were unanimous in their support of adding a plus or minus grade system. One of the observations given to me has to do with graduate students, that if in fact the grades are plus minus, it will be easier to make a judgment call to admit from our undergraduates at ASU. Unlike some of our other colleges, we do admit many of our graduate students from ASU. The other issue was a concern expressed by some honor students, and it was felt that even if the numbers of students graduating at the highest level were reduced, perhaps it would in some respects more reflective of the kind of honors that they actually deserve. One of the things that upset my faculty is students who do not complete their honors contracts; only about 20-25% of the

students complete them. So for the graduate with honors student, who actually wants to receive honors from this university and do the work, our faculty feel that plus minus grades will strengthen their case.

Senator Ball: I will respond to Senator Burstein. The ad hoc committee did not come out in favor of lying to students.

Senator Burstein: Five years from now, no one is going to remember what we did here on this issue, and students will think that they are getting plus or minus on their GPA and they won't be getting that with Senate Resolution #2 from the committee.

Senator Ball: But if we tell them that, they will know.

Senator Burstein: We can tell them that now, but are you going to go and inform every student every year?

Senator Ball: That should be written into the student manual.

President Watson: It would be, of course, in the *Catalog*.

Senator Haynes: I polled my faculty and they accepted the original proposal that expressed a very strong preference for something similar to what is now before us (the substitute resolution). I do, however, have a question concerning the scale. Can someone explain why we are not going to have A+ and why we will stop at C?

Senator Johnson: There is certainly an argument for a 4.33. There is also a large number of people who feel like a 4.0 maximum system and it is a reasonable point.

President Watson: There are some schools that give A+'s and simply give the A+ a 4.0, the same as an A.

Senator Haynes: What does that mean in terms of the option of giving plus and minus grades; what if we as faculty do not want to stop at A, and want to give A+?

President Watson: The substitute motion does not envision an A+ but the limits are open to discussion if we agree to the substitute.

Senator McDermott: In our program, and in our division, we have a similar bar and our students must maintain a B average. This is like the problem caused with the C average, and the ad hoc committee agreed that would create a problem with the GPA. I have had many comments from my students. They do understand that a full range of plus and minus grades (A+ to D-) is meant for their benefit, in order to understand how they are doing in our classes, but they prefer that it not be added into the GPA. My faculty prefer the original Senate Resolution #2 (blue sheet).

Senator Jacobs: I would like to speak against the Senate Resolution #2 (blue sheet) because the difference between the B+ and the A- is huge. The difference between a 3.0 and a 4.0, I cannot accurately say that I can separate two students that far, which is what we are having to do with the system that we have now. I think that this is actually a disadvantage over the system that we have now.

Karen Leong for Senator Anderson: I am speaking on behalf of Lisa Anderson who could not be here today, but we did poll the faculty in Women's Studies and our faculty are in favor of giving plus or minus grades generally. However, if the original Senate Resolution #2 (blue sheet) were passed, our faculty would not bother to give plus or minuses grades unless they would be averaged into the GPA. We also feel that it would mediate grade inflation as Senator Witt said, and that it would reward those students who are giving extra effort to get a B+, A, or A- grade. We are in favor of the substitute motion (white sheet).

Senator Crozier: My comment is in response to Senator McDermott. She said they have a course which requires the student to maintain a B average and that a plus/minus grade system would cause problems for such a requirement. The B average is close to the middle of the proposed numerical scale and course requirements could simply be re-expressed in terms of a numerical grade point average.

President-Elect Garcia: I want to point out that in graduate programs in my department in order to maintain status as a doctoral student in Bioengineering, you have to maintain a 3.5 GPA or greater, so, conceivably a graduate student might in this system receive a 3.3 and be disqualified by having a B+ throughout their core courses, which would be about 5-6 courses. I think there is a problem, especially with regard to graduate studies.

Senator Rice: I speak on behalf of the Department of Anthropology, and actually when we began we were in favor of the blue sheet--but the faculty in Anthropology are very strongly for a plus minus grade system, and some of the people who sent me emails said, please keep the full range of plus minus grades. They felt that A+ to D- gave people a lot of discretion to differentiate among the students, and they thought this was a very important part of the system. So, I will be voting for the amended resolution (white sheet).

Senator Aldama: I am from the Department of Chicana/Chicano Studies. Ever since I arrived here in 1996, I have always wanted to have the ability to give especially B+s, because there are so many students that are not up to quite the A level yet, but they have excellent effort and high quality work. There is a discrepancy, a big difference between a base B, B- and B+, so having the ability to be much more precise in our evaluations of student performance will be a great benefit to faculty and ultimately to students themselves. So, I will vote in favor of the amended plus minus resolution (white sheet).

Senator Siferd: I want to address the concern about the "wide" spread between the B+ and A -, when currently that spread is one point, now it would be only .333.

Senator Booksh: I was going to make the exact same comment. I disagree with B+ students getting B's and then not being eligible for a program because the cutoff is a B+, as President-elect Garcia said. I also agree with Senator Crozier's comment; if you do not like B- people being admitted, then I suggest that you could change the standard for admission to a 3.0 instead of a B.

Senator Pickus: Since we are having full discussion, I request permission for my former student to be recognized on this topic.

Ricardo Vasquez (Student): My name is Ricardo Vasquez and I am an ASASU student senator from the College of Business, where I heard about this forum. My concern is that even though I think all the professors have made valid points, there does need to be a distinction between a B+, A- and all that. But my concern is what ranges of percentage points will determine if you get an A, an A-, a B+ or a B?

It sounds to me like it will be a totally discretionary opportunity of the professor. Now, in the small classes where you have more interaction with your professor, let's say you disagree with him or her on views, and you come on as rude or overbearing. But you have a work effort that determines that you should get an A. However, is it then up to the professor if they should give you an A- when your work deserved or earned an A? So, it is problematic in my opinion because in the large lecture classes, what is the difference between an 89 and a 90 percent? Is the 89 a B+ and the 90 is an A-, or is it up to the professor to fill in that little bubble? In the small classes it does become easier to distinguish, but in my opinion I think that a range of percentages needs to be defined. That way not so much of the power is in the hands of the professors.

President Watson: Thank you. We will call you "Daniel" for coming into the lion's den. If I may respond, perhaps on behalf of the faculty, that the grading scheme *is* the responsibility of the faculty member, regardless of whether you have a plus minus system or otherwise. Cut off points are discretionary in that sense. A faculty member should at the beginning of the semester inform students what kind of grading system is in place in terms of whether they will be using percentages, or they will not be using percentages, and what those cutoffs will be. However, the change to the plus minus grade system does not change what already exists; you are dependent upon the faculty member for your grade, and for the criteria that are set up for that grading scale. Just as a personal example, I often follow the 90, 80, 70 grade received on percentages when I taught my statistics class, but then decided that was not actually good enough, so I changed that so that 93 became a 90 because that was my decision as professor. Is that a fair statement, Senator Jacobs?

Senator Jacobs: I do just the opposite. My averages are often 65 and 70, and so an 85 could be an A in my class and often it is.

President Watson: Good point. Sometimes our 90 percent expectations are not met.

Senator Witt: I use a full plus minus scale in my classes, and a "0" in my class is a C. It is always the responsibility of the faculty to give grades. I am sorry, but I am not really sorry. I think it is the responsibility of the faculty to give grades, to evaluate performance. The students evaluate the faculty anonymously every semester. The faculty must sign their name to the evaluation of students, but that is the way the system is set up. However, faculty can select from several ways of grading. One may be more discretionary; the numbers do give more possibilities. There are people who use an alpha system, others use a numerical system, and still others use a combination alpha-numerical system. They are all ordinal measures. Numerical systems are more discrete. In the end, letter grades must be converted to numbers, in order for GPA's to be calculated.

President Watson: Are we nearing the end to our discussion?

Senator Park-Fuller: Just a verification: I see a C as being more of a middle range. So, this doesn't necessarily encourage or discourage grade inflation.

President Watson: As near as we can tell from those few universities that have published some data on the impact of switching to a plus minus system, there is not much evidence that grade inflation is affected one way or the other from introducing a plus minus grading system. What you get are changes at certain places. For example, you will have fewer grades in a 3.9 or 3.8 in terms of GPA. At the very highest level some grades will drop a little bit but that will be compensated in part at other

grade points. Therefore, what happens is that the GPA overall stays the same, whereas the GPA for certain individuals will undoubtedly be affected.

Senator Park-Fuller: That was my concern.

President Watson: Are there any other comments, or are you ready to move to the question?

Senator Mayer: Move to the question.

President Watson: Any objection? Let me reassert what the question is; at the moment the question is should the white sheet (substitute amendment) be substituted for the blue sheet (Senate Resolution #2)? If you vote yes, you are saying that you would like to see the substitute amendment replace Senate Resolution #2. If you vote no, then you don't want that to happen. The white sheet would be defeated and we would then go to the question of the blue sheet, the plus minus system that does not in fact increment or decrement grades on the grade point average. Is everybody clear what they are voting on? Then, by the way, if the white sheet passes we have to take yet one more vote on accepting it or not accepting it. It will become the substitute motion; there will be an opportunity for any last minute questions on that and then we will vote.

Senator McDermott: We had a first reading on Senate Resolution #2 (blue sheet) at our January 27 meeting, but does the white sheet get to receive a second reading after today?

President Watson: You don't get a first and second reading on substitute amendments and motions because otherwise that would be a delaying tactic, to allow amendments to come in each time and you would be stuck at first readings. The advantage of a substitute motion is it immediately comes into the second reading status.

Are there further questions? Hearing none, I would instruct you that we will have a show of hands on this vote. All in favor of the substitute amendment (white sheet) substituting for the original Resolution #2 (blue sheet), please raise your hand. **The motion to substitute passed by a vote of 46 to 14, with 3 abstentions duly noted.** We will now consider this document as Senate Resolution #2 before the Senate. Is there any further discussion, before we move to a vote on that resolution?

Senator Hirata: I have a question, if the resolution that is now on the floor fails, what does that mean?

Senator Witt: Don't we still have the 1991-92 resolution to go back to?

Senator Burstein: No. We would have to separately rescind that, because it is in the motion we are considering now, that the first motion be rescinded.

President Watson: If the substituted motion fails, we are basically back to ground zero where we were before the committee was even formed to talk about plus minus grades. We will have a ten-year old resolution sitting on the books, which was not enacted, and we will have to do something about it one way or another.

Senator Witt: I recall since I was in the Senate when that original motion was discussed, it is very much like the prior motion, with the exception that it stops at C.

Senator Leingang: My concern is that we are asking students to absorb a \$1,000 tuition increase next year and that coupled with the changing in the grade system, and I am afraid—I am worried that this will actually affect the enrollment at the university. I think you should rethink this issue before you make such a dramatic change to the current grading system.

President Watson: Thank you, Mike. Are there further questions or comments?

Senator Gully: I would like to ask a question of the framers—why did you decide not to include the A+, C-, D+ and F-? Assigning the same grade to a C- as a C in other words, why not use the full system?

Senator Johnson: The proposal seeks to mitigate implementation problems. The proposal for not including plus or minus below C seeks to mitigate problems of implementation. I think that the critical issue is that we have a fine enough scale to recognize performance as we observe it. We have a motivational problem in many cases, when a student calculates that they cannot make an A. Having a finer scale will avoid that type of issue.

Senator Comfort: Just an observation and a question; the observation is that the motivation question is answered for A - C grades, but below that one then reverts to a less accurate scale, which is imbalanced.

My question is, many of the committee that dealt with these resolutions really had in its own mind that the current system should be retained. I have heard one very articulate deposition with regard to the arguments made in favor of the substitute resolution. I was wondering if there are members of that committee present who would like to articulate what the majority position of that committee was, or if they have become persuaded by the arguments and statements we have heard?

President Watson: Would anyone on the committee like to speak to that?

Senator Ball: I was and still am in favor of pluses and minuses being recorded in some kind of fashion, but as they say the devil is in the details. The more I studied the original proposal, I was less persuaded that it was a good idea, so, I would vote against it again.

Senator Krus: I perceive that the Senate leaders have obfuscated the series of amendments and counter amendments, and that is not the key issue. The key issue is whether or not to change anything at all, and they are not paying attention to what students really want. This type of series of amendments should be sent back, because I feel it is an important issue and that it is obviously not ready for a vote. I think it should be tabled.

Parliamentarian Burstein: A motion to table takes precedence.

President Watson: Do you wish to make that motion Senator Krus?

Senator Krus: I do make that motion. Motion to table was seconded by Senator Comfort.

Parliamentarian Burstein: The motion to table is not debatable.

President Watson: The motion is before us, and the motion is to table the issue indefinitely but with the understanding that the committee has need to work on this further, or perhaps something has not

yet come before the committee that should. If we vote to table the motion that will end the discussion for today and we will come back and talk about it later. If you vote against the motion to table, then we will continue the debate and ultimately vote on the question. All those in favor of tabling the issue, please raise your hand. **The motion to table was defeated by a vote of 18 in favor and 42 against with 4 abstentions duly noted.** The prior motion is now before the house. Is there further discussion of Substitute Resolution #2?

Senator Park-Fuller: I would like to hear more about the issue of whether or not to leave things the way they are. We did get an opportunity to table the substitute motion, but I do not think we should necessarily table it. I do think we should hear some further arguments on whether change is warranted at all.

Senator Hirata: My department was of that opinion, that the system has been working. So let's just leave it as it is. If we institute a plus or minus system that will result in more friction between the students' perception of their grade and the instructor. They wanted to leave it as it is. It is not my personal choice, but that would be an opinion.

Senator Swan: As far as the way it goes right now, I have gotten used to it, so, you end up making some concessions. In my situation, I think my department has done this as well. You understand that you have to have all those gradations, so, we put in criteria that assure there is no way that an A and a B are going to be the same. We do not say an A or a B arbitrarily. I am sure all of you do this as well: you figure out what your bottom line is for a real A student, and if the student doesn't make that grade then they don't get an A. So, if you leave it like it is and make your own standard very strong, I don't see that there is a problem with the way it is right now.

Senator Fowler: My faculty are not in favor of plus/minus grades, because it may create a lot of animosity with the students (because of more boundaries). However, my department would also be perfectly happy with going to a more accurate system, which is simply recording percentages. So, if the argument is for more accuracy you can still do that without plus minus grades.

Senator Johnson: I would just like to point out that if you are happy with the grades that you are awarding today, you can continue to offer A, B, C, and D without any change under the proposed amendment. You do under this system have greater flexibility and the opportunity to describe behavior more accurately, more precisely, and that should be our objective. If it should result in fewer 4.0 grade point averages, those who actually earn 4.0 grade point averages ought to have something greater to be proud of than under our current system, which perhaps does not make that distinction as precisely.

Senator Aldama: I totally agree with Senator Johnson.

President Watson: Are there further comments or are you ready for the question?

Senator Humble: In 1992 I voted for the plus minus grades resolution as I have been in the Senate in some capacity for many years now, and I heard Senator Hirata say that our department was against it. I think there may be some confusion about which vote we are bound by, the first vote or the second vote.

President Watson: You are bound to vote however you choose. That is up to you.

Senator Mattson: My concern all along has been the option of using or not using plus and minuses. I just can't imagine that within our College of Nursing that one faculty member would use plus minus grades and the one next door would not especially if it is going to be figured into the GPA! When you say that we have the option of doing it right now, we don't have the option. I have a concern that if some people can do it if they choose and some people can't or don't want to do it.

Senator Burstein: You still have that option even under the current system. I am sure that the GPA of the large lecture classes that you have vary in your overall average depending on who is teaching them. Right now, we have that option on a system which gives us a five point scale. If we go to plus or minus grades we will then have a finer grading system. If you want to give, and if any faculty member wants to give, just A, B, C, or D or E, you are welcome to do it. What I suspect will happen is that the students will demand that you give them plus or minuses in the large lecture classes, because that will more finely divide what they do.

Senator Karady: I would like very much to have the finer grading system. However, it hit me very badly that the students are so much against it. Perhaps, at this time we should think about that; we should follow the students, instead of our own judgment to use of the finer grading system because it would be better for us.

Senator Pickus: I want to address Senator Karady's point. I absolutely think it is the right decision to have the plus minuses grading system, for reasons that we have already discussed. In terms of what Senator Leingang talked about earlier--I think what we should do is this: we should let the students know that we are concerned about the general problem of anxiety on campus and their overall concerns about their education. We should not change any of our grading systems; we need this accuracy, but we should let the students know that we want to have a forum, not just to talk about plus minuses, but about the problems, too.

President Watson: Is there further discussion or are we ready to move to the question?

Senator Siferd: Realistically we send our students out to compete with students from the finest universities, which give plus and minuses and in one sense we are not being realistic, if we are sort of coddling them and indulging them on grading.

Maria Alison for Bianca Bernstein: When would this be implemented?

President Watson: This would go to the *Catalog* revision next fall to be implemented the following fall. Agreed. Of course, this is a proposal, because the Senate is making this recommendation to the University president.

I have heard a call for the question, and it requires a second (Senators Hurdle and Senator Donna Landers). A yes vote will be to affirm once again the motion that is on the white sheet, which is now before the house as Senate Resolution #2. It was substituted, and if you favor that motion it will be the recommendation of the Senate to the University president and that is namely that a plus minus system be adopted, which follows the scale and implementation presented on the white sheet. A no vote would defeat that particular motion and as we said before, would essentially put us back where we were before we started all of this.

If not, I will ask for a show of hands--all of those in favor of the motion for plus minus grades please raise your hand. All opposed please raise your hand. Those who wish to abstain please your hand.

Senate Resolution #2 was passed by a vote of 47 in favor and 18 against, with 3 abstentions duly noted.

Thanks very much for that, and for hanging in there, and I thought it was a very good discussion. Let's proceed and see if we can move through the rest of our old business.

3.B Curriculum and Academic Programs Committee (Michael Mayer).

3.B.1 Senate Motion #3 (2002-2003) (Second Reading). Senator Mayer read the motion: "The Curriculum and Academic Programs Committee recommends Academic Senate approval of a proposal submitted by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for the Establishment of an Undergraduate Certificate in Brazilian Studies."

Rationale: This Certificate program would, in the absence of an undergraduate degree program in Portuguese, allow students to pursue the array of Brazilian studies courses offered on campus in language, literature, and culture, and to receive formal recognition for such a concentration of coursework. The Certificate in Brazilian Studies will strengthen the preparation of Spanish majors or other pertinent majors in the College of Liberal Arts who seek to develop an expertise in the culture, history, religions and social structure of Brazil.

Senator Mayer: That was the rationale of the committee and I would like to make a further statement with respect to that. As some of you may know, there has been a lot of discussion over the last few years on what ought to constitute a certificate, a concentration and a minor, as they are considered by CAPC. The Committee has been frustrated by a lack of guidelines and rather than making decisions by the committee of the whole on each item, at this time, it appears that there is an effort underway; several groups, including CAPC are looking at developing guidelines that will differentiate these items. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to make a motion to table Senate Motion #3, until such time as these important guidelines are developed.

The motion to table received multiple seconds.

President Watson: Provost Glick and I have talked about this as well. There has been what seems to be a proliferation of certificate programs and no one is quite sure who is attending the helm here in terms of giving them a careful look. There is any number of committees, including at least 5 different faculty groups, that looked at this but if everybody else is assuming that someone has looked these proposals over closely, as we do on the Senate floor, we could be in a little bit of trouble here.

Senator Mayer: Actually, we do give them a careful exam; it is just that we (CAPC) don't have formalized guidelines. We do turn some proposals down.

Maria Allison for Bianca Bernstein: I would like to clarify the difference between the undergraduate and graduate certificates.

President Watson: There is a distinct difference so, go ahead and make that distinction.

Maria Allison for Bianca Bernstein: At the graduate level, the proposals that are developed undergo great scrutiny. We work with the units very carefully and then the proposal goes to the Graduate Council, which has very thoughtful and specific questions; there are rewrites to those proposals that follow. Before it goes to the other levels, the Graduate College gives them each great scrutiny.

Donna Landers: Is it required that all certificate proposals now be held back and looked at with respect to these new guidelines that are being developed?

President Watson: No. There is no retroactive implementation planned or intended. The Provost Office does not have that in mind either.

Senator Haynes: A question: can you give us some idea of how many certificates are going to come forth at this time, since we did have one today that was tabled?

Senator Mayer: That proposal only is on hold today. We apparently currently have 35 at the undergraduate level. This year we have not had many come forward. The Brazilian one is the second one this year at the undergraduate level. Since the last deadline for presenting things to CAPC has passed, my understanding is that three certificate programs have been proposed and are being held in the Provost's Office until guidelines are developed. Last year we had some.

Senator Thorton: Do you have any idea how the Brazilian Studies Certificate may impact the Latin American Studies Program?

Senator Mayer: No. The proposal came from Languages and Literatures, because they passed it then sent it forward and it had a first reading before this meeting.

President Watson: Certainly we hope that we can yet approve the Certificate in Brazilian Studies this spring. We need a month or so to clarify the guidelines.

Karen Leong for Lisa Anderson: Is there a timeline or deadline by which the certificate guidelines will be developed? This seems important because the programs proposing certificates are trying to have these in the next Catalog year or as soon as possible.

President Watson: We do not have a definite deadline in mind. It is just my hope that we can speed through this process as quickly as we can but I have not said we need to do it by March 1 or March 15.

Senator Mayer: There is a meeting on Thursday this week to discuss the formation of the guidelines.

President Watson: We hope to do it expeditiously. This is all by way of information, because we have not actually been debating the motion to table. Therefore, all in favor of the motion to table please say aye. All opposed, say no.

There was one no vote and the motion to table was passed by voice vote.

3.B.2 Senate Motion #4 (2002-2003) (Second Reading). Senator Mayer read the motion: "The Curriculum and Academic Programs Committee recommends Academic Senate approval of a proposal submitted by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for the Implementation of a Degree Program, Ph.D. in Religious Studies."

Rationale: The academic study of religion is a central component of the humanities and has become increasingly recognized as a critical tool in understanding society and politics in the global world at large. The program has two main goals: 1) to train graduate students for careers as scholars and teachers in the academic study of religion and 2) to provide supplementary training for graduate

students in a range of related programs (including history, anthropology, political science, journalism, secondary education, and justice studies) who would benefit from greater expertise regarding the nature and role of religion around the world.

If approved, the Ph.D. program in Religious Studies at ASU would be only the second Ph.D. program in the Western region of the United States to be located at a public university.

President Watson: This is a second reading and we will vote today. Is there discussion or questions for Senator Mayer or the representatives from the program who are present? David Damrel is here as professor of religious studies.

Senator Ismeurt: Do we have Senate criteria for doctoral programs, such as we are asking to have developed for certificate programs?

Senator Mayer: Yes we do, that is clear.

President Watson: We do especially for doctoral programs, even for certificate programs at the graduate level. Doctoral degrees go through the Graduate Council and the Graduate Council then gives a very close read to those proposals. There is a center point with respect to all of those programs, which we don't have at the undergraduate level. Are there any other questions?

Senator Haynes: This may not be an appropriate comment here, but any ASU doctoral program is a very expensive undertaking. I just wondered before the debate takes place on the implementation, where does the debate take place about the resources and costs involved?

President Watson: David do you care to answer that with regard to your proposal?

Senator Damrel: The planning for resources and funds involved began 3.5 years ago, and those dollars were built into the budget for that program. We also worked closely with the Provost's Office on this.

Senator Mayer: They estimate they will be enrolling four students per year and at the end of five years there will be twenty students.

Maria Allison for Bianca Bernstein: I would add that the programs committee of the Graduate Council and the Graduate Council itself has reviewed the whole justification and budget proposal for this program. We asked that they also justify placement and job opportunities, career opportunities, a range of things that they address in their proposal, and then, of course, we discussed this information with the Provost's Office. It has been well discussed.

Senator Aldama: I just wanted to make a comment as an outside observer that due to the recent hires in Latino/Latin America, religion as part of the SWBI initiative, this degree will cover an important niche for those seeking top level training in Latino religious studies. I support this degree.

Senator Mayer: The proposal said that there is no need for additional faculty. The library has sufficient volumes, the physical facilities include a need for two more offices for graduate students and they are in the process of converting MA assistantships into Graduate Associateships and Research Associateships.

President Watson: Are there any other questions on this motion? Hearing none, we will proceed to a vote. All in favor of the motion to implement the new Ph.D program in Religious Studies, please signify by saying aye. All opposed please say no. **Senate Motion #4 was approved following a voice vote, with one abstention duly noted.**

4. Announcements and Communications.

4.A Senate President's Report (George Watson).

I am going to give my report under Executive Committee new business.

4.B University Provost's Report (Milton Glick).

Thank you, given the lateness of the hour I will be brief. We have had a hearing at which President Crow made a presentation to the House Appropriations Committee. The mood was extraordinarily constructive and positive. In past years, the chairman might have said something like this, "Mr. Glick, we don't really need to hear from you, we know what you are going to say. Now we have a set of requests to speak about today, does anyone here wish to speak against the university? No? Then you don't need to speak at all." It was not like that at all this year. There were a great deal of concern expressed by both the appropriations committee of the difficulty of the financial situation, but there was none of the antagonism and confrontation that we have had in past years. Perhaps it is because there is growing recognition of the legitimate needs for investment in the University. Or, perhaps it is because when you don't have any money it is easy to say, yes, we would like to give it to you but we just don't have it. I really do think it is a good omen.

As we told you last time, the Governor's budget protects the university in this tough time with the exception that it doesn't recognize enrollment growth for East and West, and we consider that a very high priority. What is probably a more meaningful indicator though is that the joint House/Senate Education Subcommittee met and by a vote of nine to zero endorsed the request for debt service to building and research infrastructure. Considering that they had not built any buildings on our campus for well over a decade, two decades in fact, this is a very positive statement that they have actually endorsed, providing funding to build \$185 million worth of research buildings on our three campuses. It is a long way from having any money, but even to get that conceptual framework is very positive. I am also told that the chair of the House Appropriations Committee has put together a small task force to try to find the money to make this happen. I think that none of us should go out and shovel, none of us should go take anything to the bank, but in fact, it was really a very positive reception. I think they have heard the message and have at least embraced it conceptually.

Secondly, the ASU Law School and the University have filed an *amicus curie* brief in support of the Michigan Law School case with the U.S. Supreme Court, supporting race-conscious admission policies at the University of Michigan law school. It is a very powerful brief and I am told by some that it could end up being the telling brief. It goes into numbers and details about ASU's Law School admissions process, and I think we should take pride in both the Law School and our President, for having decided to go right out up front on this and make clear the importance of this Michigan case coming down correctly for all of us.

Third, I see Dan Jankowski is here and he will be speaking later. Let me say in preparation for him speaking that we do have the North Central Higher Learning Commission accreditation team coming on campus next month, and it is very important that they have a chance to meet with and hear from

faculty, staff and students and I hope you will make yourself available to them. The extraordinary effort put forth by Dan and his team in building what I think is a real model of self-study, puts all of us and Dan in his team's debt and I want to acknowledge this to the Senate because I hope that you will all be helpful, should you be called upon to participate.

Finally, we continue to be concerned about explaining adequately the new admission policy as well as tuition and financial aid. In the past week, I have met with the College of Public Programs Dean's Council, the Cronkite Endowment Board and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. I will be meeting next week with Chicanos Por La Causa, and others in the administration are having similar meetings, to explain what we are trying to do and why we are trying to do it, in a way that meets with positive response from those who are the constituents of the University. I will be happy to answer questions or take comments.

Maria Allison for Bianca Bernstein: How do they respond, after you have given them your discussion?

Provost Glick: Very positively. As you know, my greatest concern is the changing admission standards, even though we intend to accept most of the students we would have previously, but that assumes some reasonable budget outcome. To give one example, the Hispanic Chamber not only embraced it but offered to communicate to all of its members and to write letters to both the House and the Senate embracing our budget request as well as these changes. I met with the Chicano Faculty and Staff Association, whom I think had many questions and concerns but felt very good about the direction we are going. Thus far, every meeting that I have been at I have received a lot of questions, but also a lot of positive nods, so, I am very optimistic that we are getting our message across. Again, my major concerns are: 1) if we don't have a reasonable budget, how do we maintain our ability to deal with all the students who are qualified, and 2) there is some talk that the legislature would take the tuition increase and sweep that up to solve their problem. You should know I don't believe they will do that; I believe they will decide how much they want to cut our budget or add to our budget, then discuss why they did it. I think that if students have accepted a substantial tuition increase and if that money would be swept away to essentially become a patch to solve the state's budget problem--without a two-thirds majority of the legislature embracing a new tax, as long as they leave that money here, it is not a tax, it is a user fee and it is within the rights of the constitution of the Regents to embrace such a user fee in this state. I felt very good about these meetings and we deliberately have gone to meet with groups with the greatest concerns. Somebody met with the Urban League last week, although I could not make that meeting. We are getting very positive feedback. Again, if there would be any direct coupling of the tuition increase to take the money away from the University, I think that would be a terrible political signal and a terrible problem for us, who have endorsed with student support a substantial tuition increase and better financial aid. I can tell you that in 1991 that is exactly what we did. The next year we did not increase tuition at all because it was hard to argue that we should increase tuition, which was just going to be tax dollars. I don't believe the legislature will do that. Again, when the final budget comes out it is always hard to determine how that number was arrived at, and who do what for what reason. So, you always have that difficulty that it is hard to tie A to B, but if it is tied directly, I think it has great promise for the future.

Senator Crozier: I just want to compliment you on how you are communicating your message out to these significant constituencies, but one thing that I did notice was that in many of the media opportunities there was not something said about 50% of the tuition increase going to financial aid--that was rarely quoted in the media. It could be in part because our media is being sensitive in the

middle of our financial crisis, as some people are being given initial money at the same time that students are being given an increase in tuition. I think that even though I appreciate both aspects, you can perhaps conceive of a media disaster if this is not handled very carefully, and the media takes it out of context.

Provost Glick: Your points are both well taken. If I could control the media, I would probably get sleep more nights than I do. I am very concerned about the way the media has portrayed this, and my largest concern is that the very students, the low income ones that we most wanted to help, will be scared off or their families will and that is why we are going to groups like Chicanos Por La Causa, to get them to help us. We have a consulting firm to help us get media assurances; we are going to have advertisements on the Spanish language radio stations, but all that being said and done, it is a problem. I understand your point. You should know that when the issue in this week's *Senate Newsletter* comes out, there is a letter from our President discussing the bigger picture on salaries and our future intent there. You will not agree with it all, but you will understand it better, and I hope that you understand the reasoning he had and at least feel that it was a rational and appropriate thing to do.

Senator Crozier: But not many actually do read the *Senate Newsletter*. We need some sound bites too.

Provost Glick: But they should read the *Newsletter*, and you are absolutely right in our comment on media coverage and we are working on that.

Senator Dwyer: You may have gone into this level of detail with some of the groups you have talked to, but can you explain it here because I have not heard anything on what the money for financial aid looks like. Is it scholarships? Loans? What does it look like?

Provost Glick: It is all scholarship money. It will go into our set aside, which is used for need based scholarships and it will increase from \$7 million to \$19 million. It will all be in direct scholarships. Our goal is to reduce the dependence of students in the lowest income group on loans and work, because we know that we have a real problem with students who have to take out a lot of loans. It is all meant to be grant money and will be for the support of our students, for students in the lowest income group, most of whom are Pell grant recipients. We will hold them completely harmless from the increase and reduce their unmet need—reduce their dependence on loans and work. For students in the next group we will offset part of the tuition increase, but not all of it. The goal is to get more money to reduce the loan dependence.

I have a question of Senator Witt. How do you use the scale from 10 to 0, and 0 is a C? Surely you have some subnormal students.

Senator Witt: We have plus and minus grades, and some people have a standing of +1 and -1 on my scale. A C grade is assigned a value of 0; D is assigned the value of -1.

Provost Glick: That explains it then. Thank you. Are there other questions? If not, I wanted to say that I found the discussion on grades as well as the discussion on certificates most constructive and thoughtful, and I appreciate the good work that all of you do for ASU.

President Watson: Moving just slightly out of order, Dan Jankowski will speak to us now (Item 4.H, HLC Accreditation Report). We know that the visit is coming up rather quickly so it was really necessary to have Dan report to us at our February meeting, even though we knew that the discussion

of plus minus grades was going to take up the largest amount of time. So, we will hear from Dan and then I anticipate we will finish up this meeting a bit beyond our normal time.

4.C HCL Accreditation Report (Daniel Jankowski).

Thank you George. It is interesting to be here on an issue that last happened ten years ago, the plus minus grades resolution. As Dr. Glick said, he would be brief and that is my cue to try to be brief.

What this is about is the continuing accreditation of ASU Main and East. This is the regular accreditation that occurs on a ten year interval, assuming there are no serious problems. ASU West is separately accredited, so they will not be a part of this. What I would like to do is tell you a bit about what is going on, the current status of our effort. Milt has already told you that the Self-Study Report, which is one of the requirements of the accreditation, is done with their work. The end report is a document over 300 pages long. It is available on the web and copies have been provided to academic units so that you can sign it out and look at it. It is also available in CD format and you may check this format out in the academic units. It is also available to download from the web site, so that you can read or use the web as a way to look at. Milt mentioned our team, and there are several people to here today and several have left the meeting--Dan Landers, Maria Allison, Ernest Hirata and others—I thank them all, and they have done a good job.

We have an evaluation team in place consisting of 12 academics. The team has in fact has visited ASU in October. A draft schedule for the site visit has been completed and is currently in the team's hands. The visit is going to be Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday over spring break, that is March 24-26. The structure of the self-study report was different than the last time I spoke to you over a year ago. We learned a little; back then it was process and now we actually have results. You can see from my overhead, the titles of the chapters. This is not all of it, but there are fairly obvious things up there. One of the key chapters is the overview, Chapter 2, and I will say more about that in a moment. This is the rest of the self-study report, the remaining chapters. George Watson and Doug Johnson contributed to Chapter 11, along with a lot of other people. There is an appendix, which is essentially technical information about the institution and an addendum, which is a take off on President Crow's inaugural address. It has been changed and the language has been changed, but in essence it was the starting point. It went through seven or eight drafts. We have two pieces to the report, Chapters 1-12 with the appendix looking backward, and the addendum looking forward.

The visiting team has many distinguished members: Philip Certain, University of Wisconsin (chair of the team), Shirley Barton, Kent State, Rosa Cintron, University of Oklahoma, David Colburn, University of Florida, Sue Day-Perroots, West Virginia University, Frederick Ernshousen, Purdue University, Roy Koenigsknecht, Ohio State University, Carol Lynch, University of Colorado at Boulder, Sylvia Manning, University of Illinois at Chicago, Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, University of California at Los Angeles, Doyle Williams, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and Dina Zinnes, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

If you look at the web site, you can get their full academic status and their administrative status. The Team chair and the remaining members are from distinguished institutions that may have feelings toward some of the particular problems that we face here.

What does the team want from you? Obviously, we want you to do some things! We want you to read the report and encourage your colleagues to read it. It would be very good to get some of our students to read the report as well. If you don't read the entire report what I would suggest you do is read

Chapter Two, the overview, and then read the summaries of the various chapters, three through eleven. Those are so called criteria chapters that have to do with the criteria for accreditation. Those summaries are roughly a page or two in length, so it is not a very onerous task. We also urge you to read the addendum, which is called “New Directions.” It is about twenty pages long, double spaced, so again it is not very difficult reading.

We would like you to participate in the site visit and that includes some of you will be asked to actually meet with the team or with team members. As soon as we get the draft schedule back from the team, we will make those requests and I hope if you are asked that you will be able to participate. We need your participation. Secondly, all of you can intend to participate in the open forums that will be held during the visit. There are open forums for faculty, staff, students and the community. These will be opportunities for people to meet with the team and express concerns, and talk to the team and probably answer some questions from the team. We don't know when those times will be scheduled, but they are likely to be on the Monday and Tuesday of the three day period I mentioned earlier, but until I get the schedule back I cannot confirm that. This will be publicized widely, and we will probably ask Milt to send out another memo. There will probably be some sort of ad that we will pay for in the *State Press*.

I hope I was brief. I hope that you will participate in this activity, talk it up and talk it up among your colleagues. Those of us that have worked on this for a long time would certainly welcome your involvement in this thing and your help to bring it to a successful conclusion. Thank you.

President Watson: The time that Dan has put into to this is just incredible, just remarkable and we appreciate what he has done on behalf of the university.

Back to the announcements and communications. I gave President Crow the day off, knowing how crowded our agenda was. Antonio Garcia had to leave to attend another meeting. Mike Leingang has left, but Mort Munk has a report.

4. D Past President's Report (Morton Munk).

There was a legislative reception last week for District 17 legislators. It was a very productive meeting. Mark Anderson, Meg Burton-Cahill and Harry Mitchell attended. Each indicated opposition to further budget cuts to the university. There was some concern about increasing enrollment and what would be done about that, but interestingly, the discussion spoke to the needs of departments like English, where they have a large number of students and some classes are taught by faculty associates and graduate students. The point was made that if you want to help the English department, fund the research infrastructure for the university, allow strong research units to become self-supporting. Core state funding can then adequately support core academic programs.

4.E West Senate Report (George Watson for Fran Bernat).

No one could be here from West today, but Fran submitted a report. I will share with you something from the report that affects main campus. West Senate was ahead of us just slightly on the plus minus issue, in terms of coming through their Senate for discussion and a vote, and it turns out that they approved the Penn State model, which is what we approved earlier today. So, West and Main and by incorporation, East, appear to have agreed on the same recommendation with respect to plus minus grades.

4.F East Assembly Report (Ernest Hirata). No further report from East.

4.G Senate President's Report (George Watson).

Let me just mention a couple of things. The *Senate Newsletter* will be coming out. As Milt mentioned, I had that on hold briefly because I had asked the President and the Provost to submit for us a statement regarding salary more broadly cast than the most recent salary increase that was given. What I felt was needed was something more long term, giving us insight into what that salary policy might be. I received that letter last Friday, and I will put that into the *Senate Newsletter* along with other items, which basically constitute my Senate report. I thought it would be good if the newsletter covered what was going on in a wide variety of areas dealing with promotion and tenure, and the creation of a new task force on P&T (II), a University Design Team and the creation of a task force for that, a University College and what might be happening there and any number of other issues that have come forward. There are a couple of new ones that I wanted to mention very quickly now. There has been a proposal to us from the Academic and Administrative Advisory Committee on academic recognition, and I have assigned that to the Curriculum and Academic Programs Committee (Michael Mayer). It is a proposal that would basically change the requirements for graduation with Academic Recognition. What they are proposing is that the threshold for cum laude would move from a 3.4 to a 3.5, for magna cum laude from a 3.6 to a 3.7 and for a summa cum laude from a 3.8 to a 3.9. In addition, they are recommending that we change from 60 to 56 hours, the number of hours required in residence at ASU Main and ASU East. This is a policy recommendation that is coming from that committee, which will come to CAPC and ultimately come before our Senate. That will be in the *Senate Newsletter* as well. In addition, when the newsletter comes out, accompanying it will be a survey that we hope will be distributed in all the faculty boxes, a survey on campus classrooms. It will ask faculty to submit back to us any classrooms that they would like to identify as lacking, or perhaps impeding or impairing in some way the teaching and learning process for them in that classroom, and alternatively, to list for us what they see as being good classrooms, ones that they are teaching in, and whether or not there are things that they would like to see, or recommendations that they would like to make with respect to academic room scheduling. We need the survey back and we will send it out with the *Newsletter*.

Are there any questions on that? Moving along, we are at open forum now.

5. Open Forum. No items were presented for discussion.

President Watson mentioned that one of the Senators last week asked him to look into the situation of computing on campus, and some of the recent problems that have arisen with respect to computing with the e-mail services, etc. I thought we would invite the Vice Provost for IT, Bill Lewis to speak to us at our March meeting. If you have no objections to that, this will be an opportunity to ask questions. We will now move on to new business.

6. New Business.

6.A Executive Committee (George Watson). No report.

6.B Committee on Committees (Ernest Hirata). No report.

President Watson: Committee on Committees has been meeting regularly to work on the ballot and is making spring nominations for service beginning in fall of 2003 on University Committees, Boards

and Councils, from the results of the Preference Survey data. Mike Mayer is next with new items from CAPC for first readings.

6.C Curriculum and Academic Programs Committee (Michael Mayer).

6.C.1 Senate Motion #5 (2002-2003) (First Reading): Senator Mayer introduced the motion: “The Curriculum and Academic Programs Committee recommends Academic Senate approval of a request from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for the Implementation of a New Academic Degree Program – Audiology.”

Rationale: A new professional doctorate degree in Audiology is proposed to prepare audiologists for clinical certification under new national standards that reflect the expanded scope of practice in the field of Audiology. The proposed degree will use the designator Au.D, as do most other universities that have implemented similar programs. The four year Au.D degree will replace the existing two year M.S. degree in Audiology, currently offered by the Department of Speech and Hearing Science, as the entry-level degree for practicing audiologists. The Au.D will be offered by the Department of Speech and Hearing Science and be awarded by the Graduate College.

Are there any questions? Hearing none, we will introduce the next motion.

6.C.2 Senate Motion #6 (2002-2003) (First Reading): Senator Mayer introduced the motion: “The Curriculum and Academic Programs Committee recommends Academic Senate approval of a request from the College of Nursing for the Implementation of a New Academic Degree Program DNS - Doctor of Nursing Science.”

Rationale: The implementation of doctoral preparation in nursing is essential to ensure much needed leadership in the work place as well as in the educational setting and by doing so, help nurses to thrive in complex and technologically dependent health care systems. A doctoral program in nursing at ASU will provide increased access for nurses to become clinical researchers and clinical leaders who can help create supportive work environments to retain nurses graduated. If approved, the DNS program in Nursing at ASU would be the first DNS program in the Western region of the United States.

Are there any questions on either of these motions?

Senator Karady: Do they have any of these programs at other universities?

Representative from Nursing: Yes there are.

Senator Karady: Which ones?

Representative from Nursing: There are DNS programs at Columbia University, at Indiana University, Case Western University, Johns Hopkins University, just to name a few. There are a number of others.

Senator Mayer: Thanks to both the representative from Audiology and the representative from Nursing for being here to answer questions.

6.D Personnel Committee (Doug Johnson).

6.D.1 Senate Resolution #3 (2002-03) Senator Johnson introduced the resolution which endorses the recommendations of the Task Force on Non Tenure Track Faculty. The concerns of the task force were to provide opportunities for professional development, to improve salaries for non-permanent, full-time faculty and to improve their job stability and the status of lecturers and to provide them greater input into University matters. This is a first reading, and it will be considered at the March 24, Senate meeting. The text of the resolution follows:

“Whereas: ASU endorses the need to provide opportunities for professional development and growth for lecturers and other non-permanent full time faculty; and

“Whereas: ASU is committed, over time, to improving the salaries of non-permanent, full time faculty, particularly faculty providing instruction central to the University’s mission and strategic priorities; and

“Whereas: ASU is committed to improving the status and job stability of its lecturers as a means of recruiting, maintaining, and rewarding quality people in these positions; and

“Whereas: ASU recognizes the need to provide greater input to the University Administration regarding issues of importance concerning such matters as benefits and career progression;

“Be it hereby resolved:

“That colleges ensure that opportunities for professional development and growth are available for full time, non-permanent faculty, particularly faculty who serve on multi-year appointments. Professional development options ought to be directly related to the expectations of a faculty member's current employment, and may be available on a competitive basis. Examples of activities consistent with this recommendation include, but are not limited to, departmental or college-wide programs for lecturer development, grant funds for curriculum development, travel support to meetings for professional development, including discipline-specific academic meetings as well as meetings dealing with pedagogy, and grants for focused study and professional growth.

“That progress towards the goal of improving the salaries of all Lecturers and other full time, non tenure-accruing faculty be measured by relevant salary comparisons within and between groups, and in relation to appropriate bench marks. It is understood that salaries would continue to vary by discipline and across the University due to market forces, as is the case for the salaries of tenured and tenure track faculty and graduate teaching assistants.

“That the University entertain the possibility of providing an option for rolling three-year appointments, constituted as yearly commitments to a three-year employment period for eligible non tenure-accruing, full time faculty.

“That an Advisory Committee to the Provost on Full Time, Non-Permanent Faculty be established. This advisory committee should be composed of a representative group of full time, non-permanent faculty (including representation from each group within the category of full time, non-tenure accruing faculty, e.g., Instructors, clinical faculty, etc.). The purpose of this advisory group is to provide information, recommendations, and feedback to the Provost, and to act as a sounding board on issues regarding personnel policies and procedures for non-permanent, full time faculty.”

Senator Johnson: Other comments--the current issue of health insurance is still very prominent. As you know, the legislature has relaxed the requirement for self-insurance for the next year. We are currently attempting to renegotiate the Cigna contract for next year. Cigna is due to provide their rates on the 28th and we hope that there is not such a great increase that we cannot afford it! We have been working closely with the Department of Administration to communicate our needs and expectations; our priorities are to maintain an affordable PPO. We still are asking for a cap on prescriptions and a third tier rate structure, but frankly, Cigna is posturing for a large increase and maintaining the affordability of the PPO is our highest priority.

6.E Student Faculty Policy Committee (Craig Allen).

Please help us get the classroom survey that George talked about out to your faculty when it arrives in your department. That's it for now.

6.F University Affairs Committee (Karen Dwyer). No report.

President Watson: Karen had to leave before her report came up, but we want you to review the bylaws and let Karen know about any proposals you may have for change to the *ACD 112-01, Academic Constitution and Bylaws*. Is there any other business we need to consider today? Hearing none, we are adjourned.

7. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned 5:11 p.m.

Recorded and edited by:
Darby Shaw, Executive Assistant

Final editing by:
Ruth Yabes, Secretary of the Senate