Colleagues,

This memorandum serves as ongoing communication related to the Refined Grading System, also known as the Plus/Minus Grading System. Starting in fall 2014, the Refined Grading System (RGS) will be the only system in use at RIT and faculty will be expected to use it when assessing student performance.

The RGS was approved by the Academic Senate on April 23, 2009. Because of calendar conversion and the migration to the new Student Information System (SIS), implementation of the RGS was postponed until the fall 2014 term. Documentation relevant to the RGS can be found at my website’s Student Success tab.

During the greater part of the 2013-2014 academic year, a sub-committee of the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) of the Academic Senate was charged to review existing university policies that include a grade and/or GPA standard. The charge included making recommendations for policy changes that would result from the adoption of the RGS. The AAC worked in consultation with the Graduate Council, the Office of Enrollment Management and Career Services, the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarship and Academic Affairs. The AAC reported the results of their work during the Academic Senate meeting of April 24, 2014. The meeting minutes and the AAC’s presentation can be found at the Academic Senate’s website. The AAC reviewed and recommended no substantive changes to the following undergraduate and graduate policies:

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Please note that policy D 05.0 (Grades) will be edited to reflect the switch from the Whole Letter Grading System (A, B, C, D, F) to the Refined Grading System (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, F).

The AAC’s recommendation, which I uphold, is that the policies listed above remain unchanged; except those parts of the policies where grades are mentioned, the text should be edited to include both the
grade and the point value. For example, phrases such as “A Grade of C is required” should be edited to state that “A grade of C (2.0) is required.”

**Undergraduate minimum progression grade**

To ensure the quality of our undergraduate programs, certain departments have policies and guidelines in place that require students to earn a minimum grade in specific courses. Specifically, while D is the university’s minimum passing grade, some programs currently require students to earn a C or better grade as a prerequisite to continue on with the next course in a course sequence. Currently, there are only 30 such prerequisites in place across the university.

However, the switch to the RGS provides us with an opportunity to reassess our minimum progression grade policies and guidelines. In particular, should C remain the minimum progression grade or should that grade be C-? There are strong arguments in favor and against maintaining C as the minimum progression grade.

In the meantime, in order to ensure that students continue to make progress towards their degree, beginning in fall semester 2014, and for a trial period of two years, C- will be the minimum progression grade where C was previously required. During that time we will track students and will study the effect of this decision. After the spring semester of the 2015-2016 academic year, we will evaluate the impact of this decision and will either change it or make it a university-wide policy.

**Multiple sections**

Starting in fall 2014, the RGS will be the only grading system in use at RIT and faculty will be expected to use it. However, it is possible that some faculty may, as their personal choice, only assign a subset of the ten grades available in the RGS. This may put students under undue pressure as they select which section of a multiple section course to register for. Some students may be swayed in favor or against a faculty member’s grading policy.

I will ask the deans to engage their colleges in meaningful conversations where this specific matter will be discussed and any resolutions communicated to me in writing by September 15, 2014.

In closing, the switch to the RGS may provide colleges and programs with an opportunity to re-evaluate program, course sequence and/or college minimum grade standards. Please be advised that RIT’s policy requires that any such changes be

1. Approved by the college’s respective dean,
2. Clearly defined within published college policy,
3. Communicated in the university bulletin and
4. Communicated to the Provost’s Office

In addition,

5. For programs housed outside the college structure, approval of the director of the academic unit is required.
I will ask the deans to facilitate conversations in each college and to communicate to the Office of the Provost any changes in grade-based policies and guidelines that the college or its departments intend to implement as a result of the switch to the Refined Grading System. Minimally, communication from each of the colleges to the provost should include the following:

1. Itemized list of decisions made by the college and/or its units explaining which internal policies were changed as a result of the switch to the RGS.
2. Communication mechanism that the college and/or its departments will use to inform the university community about these changes.
3. Summary of any agreements reached by the college and its units that may represent deviations from what is outlined in this memorandum.

These communications should be provided to me by September 15, 2014.

Jeremy Haefner
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

For more information on this and other topics, please visit http://www.rit.edu/provost/