Progress towards Implementing the Plus/Minus Grades

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Provost
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Summary

• Academic Senate approved a proposal to add A-, B+, B-, C+, C-, and D+ to the whole letter grades of A, B, C, and D in the spring of 2009.

• Provost agrees to implement in the fall of 2010.
Process to establish implementation

- Considerable dialogue and discussion occurred in the summer and fall of 2009
- Input gathered from students and faculty who voiced support as well as those who expressed concern
- Provost met with Student Government and Academic Senate executive committee; formed implementation taskforce:
  - Registrar
  - Provost
  - Faculty: Matt Miri and Alejandro Engle
  - Students: Nicholas Schneider and Teraisa Chloros
Key considerations

- Plus/minus marks advantageous to students searching for jobs and co-ops
- Concern about consistent use of marks for those courses that offer multiple sections
- Concern about how marks might affect financial aid (e.g., scholarships) as well as retention and progress towards degree
Three guiding principles

• The addition of plus/minus marks shall offer faculty, who so choose to use them, a mechanism to assess student performance with greater refinement than the current whole letter grade structure provides.

• The implementation shall have a minimal impact on retention, student’s ability to retain financial aid, and student’s progress towards degree completion.

• The implementation shall be fair and consistent.
Implementation decisions

• Implementation will begin effective academic year 2010-2011
• This initial year shall be a period of partial implementation in order to ensure that the guiding principles are met prior to full implementation
• Initial period will allow information flow and enable study of effects
• Provost to report back in spring of 2011
• Full implementation expected in fall of 2011
Requirements I

• Each department shall formulate guidelines on how the plus/minus grading will be used
• In general, each individual faculty member will decide whether they will use the plus/minus marks
• However, for courses with multiple sections, departments shall develop specific policy language on the use of plus/minus marks in courses that have multiple sections
Requirements II

• Faculty who use the plus/minus marks will be required to inform students in their syllabus

• Only base letter grades will be used to calculate grade point averages
  – Plus/minus marks will appear on transcripts and the institution will provide appropriate information with each transcript about the calculation of the grade point average
Requirements III

• The grade of C- will be considered equivalent to the grade of C for those courses that serve as a prerequisite or co-requisite for other courses
  – Departments that have courses with prerequisite or co-requisite that require a C or better in any course will be instructed to accept the grade of C- as sufficient for these purposes
  – This action is being taken so that a student’s progress toward their degree is not interrupted
Questions and discussion