MEMORANDUM

To: The RIT student and faculty community

From: Jeremy Haefner, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Subject: Progress towards implementing the Plus/Minus Grades

Date: 12 March 2013

This memorandum serves as ongoing communication to the RIT community on the consultation and implementation process for the addition of a plus-minus grading schema to the existing whole letter grading structure at RIT. For clarification, here is a brief recap of the implementation process so far:

- In April 2009, the Academic Affairs committee submitted a proposal to change to a plus-minus “refined” grading system and the proposal was approved at the 4/23/2009 Academic Senate meeting.

- Partial implementation was scheduled to begin in academic year 2010-2011 but, due to the calendar conversion efforts being initiated and the upgrade of the student information system, the implementation was postponed in February 2010 until the 2013-2014 academic year.

- In 2012, a Plus-Minus Grading Taskforce was established to facilitate dialogue and collect insights and observations from the campus community. In the fall quarter, a three-part study analyzing the potential impact of refined grading on student GPAs was completed by the taskforce. The results, which were presented to the Academic Senate on 3/7/2013, are in line with what we have learned from the literature and what other institutions have found.

While the taskforce’s findings do not provide any reason to deviate from implementing the refined grading system, there is still more work to be done to assure that there are adequate policies in place relating to student grades and/or GPA. To assure consistency and uniform implementation, conversations need to take place at the college, program and department levels.
regarding, but not limited to: multiple section courses, course sequences, and prerequisites, as well as scholarship, athletic and employment requirements. Faculty are currently in the process of reorganizing course materials to conform to the new semester format, and continuing to absorb changes related to the new student information system (SIS) upgrade; adding yet another challenge seems counterproductive at this point. As a result, RIT will postpone the start date of the refined grading system to the fall of 2014.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, I will charge the colleges and departments to develop policies that ensure that the refined grading system at RIT will be fair and consistent. Despite this delay, RIT is fully committed to implementing the refined grading system; it places us more in-line with our peer institutions and provides a more accurate assessment of student learning.

As I share this update, please know that the implementation of the refined grading system will continue to be based on open communication, transparency of process, and careful attention to the academic success of our students.

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