FOLLOW-UP REPORT TO THE FACULTY SENATE ON PLUS/MINUS GRADING

Prepared by the Student Government Association Executive Branch

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I. Negative impact on recruitment and retention:
   A. Not used elsewhere in KY
      i. EKU grads less competitive with other KY grads when entering work force, graduate school, law school, etc.
   B. Disadvantage to top students
      i. Honors Program: 94% disapproval and belief that system will hurt their GPAs.
      ii. No reward for exceptional performance; lack of A+
      iii. President Elect of KY Association for Gifted Education, Pat Noble—"The plus/minus system is a nebulous reflection of the students’ achievements and does not reflect the true accomplishments made by bright individuals."
      iv. Rick Matthew’s Model (negative impact above 3.4; greatest at 3.8).
      v. 70% all EKU students receive some form of financial aid, 80% including KEES recipients; all GPA dependent.

II. Illusion of accuracy if no clearly specified learning criteria:
    A. Arbitrary expectations: Faculty not using pluses or minuses, assigning them for attendance, 80%-95% = B; 92%-97% = A-, etc.
    B. Does not address faculty accountability for classroom performance and quality of teaching.
III. Will not “fix” grade inflation
   A. Assumption that grade inflation is bad
      i. Students whose grades increased dramatically from 1983-1996 scored 10-16 on ACT.
      ii. Open admissions policy since removed - must score 18 on ACT.
      iii. Grade inflation shows increase of better and more focused students.
   B. Problems with grade inflation report:
      i. Holds individual students accountable for low faculty expectations and classmates’ poor performance.
      ii. Study did not include a diverse sampling of students.
      iii. No evidence of outside research.

IV. Fairness
   A. If grade inflation exists, blames students for faculty’s increased assignment of high grades.
   B. Students already established GPA under one grading scale.

V. Lack of Faculty Support
   A. 1998 survey: 42% wanted option to use plus/minus
   B. 3 votes by Senate before new scale established
   C. New structure of Senate: reduced administration
FACULTY SURVEY  (N = 86)

Mean

1.78  1. Overall, I support the plus/minus grading scale.

1.98  2. Plus/Minus will benefit my students.

2.18  3. Plus/Minus will solve grade inflation.

3.38  4. Plus/Minus is confusing to my students.

2.6   5. Plus/Minus is simple to administer in my classes.

1=Strongly Disagree  2=Disagree  3=Neither Disagree nor Agree  4=Agree  5=Strongly Agree

STUDENT SURVEY  (N = 145)

Mean

1.68  1. Overall, I like the plus/minus grading scale.

3.48  2. I would choose a University with a 5-point scale over one with a 12-Point scale.

3.28  3. Plus/Minus will affect my financial aid.

3.14  4. I find Plus/Minus confusing.

2.03  5. My professors support Plus/Minus.

1=Strongly Disagree  2=Disagree  3=Neither Disagree nor Agree  4=Agree  5=Strongly Agree
This should be decided by faculty not students.

If continuing with system it is only fair to award A+ or A then B+/- through D. current system dilutes value of A.

I think they should use the system at University of Wisconsin: A – AB – B – BC – C – etc.

Evaluation of our student’s transcripts by outside agencies, like graduate or professional schools, will be problematic.

It is a hideous, stupid system. It needs to be scraped.

This is a new process and acceptance by students ay increase after they become accustomed to it.

The system will lower the average student’s GPA.

See 1-3 above!

Change is always hard, but overall I think it is good, once you get used to it.

Plus/minus is more discrete and I feel better about the grades I assign.

I could support the assignment or percentage grades but the addition of a +/- is just adding to the breaking points and will create a higher level of student/teacher tension.

Generally, my students have not liked this system

Students say it actually penalizes them.

Yuk.

I don’t like the policy that forces all instructors to give plus/minus grades. That is an instructor’s choice at most universities.

Useless complication, it sucks.

Why voice your opinion now, after it has been implemented-why not speak up earlier?

While simple, it takes up much time and seems to have little value.

I was adamantly opposed to this issue and voted no when I was on Faculty Senate. I see this in direct opposition to student retention and a waste of financial resources.

Plus/Minus hurts most of my students GPA and does not affect grade inflation since my grading methods do not allow grade inflation.

I see no advantage to a +/- system. How it could stop grade inflation is beyond me. Faculty who “pad” grades to increase popularity will still continue to do so. We’ve added a lot of confusion for nothing.
Student Comments
SGA PLUS/MINUS SURVEY

- It’s going to make my cumulative GPA go way down. So that’s sad.
- I dislike it completely. It will affect my GPA drastically and I feel it’s unfair.
- I think an A is an A regardless to the grading scale. According to the +/-, if you worked hard for an A, then you deserve the points for an A towards your GPA.
- I don’t like this system, because when I started this college it wasn’t that way.
- I work very hard to make decent grades (3.3 or so) and now I will have to work twice as hard to receive the same grades.
- It causes trouble for students.
- It hurts students more than it helps us.
- It should have been grandfathered in.
- I believe it is unfair to those students who needs a good GPA who are competing against other universities with a 5 point scale, like graduate school, medical school.
- Plus-minus rewards those who make Bs and below by providing a plus, yet they do not reward those that make As with an A+. In fact they penalize them by taking some of the 4 points that they worked so hard to achieve/attain! It is inconsistent and unfair.
- I have attended other universities and they have the average 5 point scale which works much better for the students and their future.
- If going to be implement plus/minus, then it should only begin with incoming freshman.
- The plus/minus system has not proven to be beneficial to any student at EKU or other universities who have been on the same system.
- If the university wants to implement +/-, it should be on incoming freshman and not those who had a 5 point scale in their undergrad catalog.
- We hate the +/- scale!
- I don’t like the change, I believe it affects my GPA.
- Being a paralegal student with hopes of going to law school, this could be very damaging for my future.
- It could affect my financial aid.
- It’s not fair.
- I strongly dislike the 12 point grading scale.
- Some of the professors use it, but not all.
- May we go back to the old grading scale?
- If the plus/minus scores will affect my GPA and Financial Aid, I want it to be the easiest way to get financial assistance.
- I am thinking of transferring to another school that doesn’t have a +/- system.
- As a 4.0 student for last two terms, I now find myself worrying about my A instead of learning. How does this affect President’s List, Dean’s List, and Scholarships?
- Do not like this system at all.
- Do not like this grading scale.