Report of the Louisiana State University and A&M College (LSU) Faculty Senate Committee on the Implementation of Plus/Minus “Suffix” Grading

Final Report
Respectfully submitted, September 5, 2013

Members:
Mandi J. Lopez, Veterinary Medicine (Chair), Don Chance, Business (Resolution Sponsor), Warren Waggenspack Mechanical and Industrial Engineering (STEM Disciplines and the Associate Deans), Robert Doolos, Registrar, Patricia Beste, Associate Registrar, Gerald Knapp, Mechanical and Industrial Engineering (ASH Member), Gil Reeve, Vice Provost for Academics Programs, Planning and Review (Ex-officio, non-voting), Joan King, Food Science (Faculty Senate Executive Committee), Larry Rouse, Oceanography and Coastal Sciences (Chair, Courses and Curriculum Committee), Thomas Rodgers (Student Government), Charles Delzell, Mathematics (Associate Chair for Instruction)

Academic Year 2012-2013
Background

Resolution 11-20 “A Plus and Minus Grading System for LSU” was introduced by Professor Don Chance at the November 3, 2011 Faculty Senate meeting (Appendix A). Following the second reading at the Faculty Senate meeting on January 19, 2012, the senate voted to table the resolution and established a task force for further study. A committee (Ad Hoc Committee on Plus/Minus Grading) chaired by Professor Mandi Lopez was formed in February 2012 to consider the potential impact of implementation of a +/- (suffix) grading system at LSU. The four points considered by the committee were as follows:

1. To assess consistency with current standards, those grading systems in place in current “peer” and research institutions were determined.

2. The potential to influence the grade point average (GPA) of incoming students was assessed to determine if GPAs are altered following conversion in the LSU system by removal of grade suffixes. (For example, will an incoming student with a GPA of 1.7 be raised to a 2.0 by removal of the “-“ suffix from the grade?)

3. Potential influence on credentialing/certification programs was determined.

4. The cost reflected in the number of programmer hours required to convert the current system was estimated.

The methods and conclusions are detailed in the final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Plus/Minus Grading dated April 27, 2012 which was made publicly available.

Conclusions of the Final Report Submitted by the Ad Hoc Committee on Plus/Minus Grading

April 27, 2012

1. Use of a suffix grading system is consistent with current standards in the majority of peer Universities considered and that the suffix grading system provides greater resolution in student grades that is relevant to some, but not all courses.

2. There is no conclusive evidence of negative effects on student GPAs, credentialing, or admission to post-baccalaureate programs.

3. The use of grade suffixes should be the prerogative of individual instructors and not mandatory.

4. The cost of retrofitting the grading scale into existing student information systems may not be justified and it should instead be implemented in the new information systems.

5. A voluntary exercise to evaluate the effects of suffix grading within different programs and colleges may be warranted to provide data on which to base decisions surrounding use of the suffix systems within them.

Passage: At its October 2, 2012 meeting, the Faculty Senate adopted Resolution 11-20 by a vote of 26 to 14. The time and location of the meeting was publicly announced by broadcast e-mail on September 18, 2012 (Broadcast LSU Community@cmpuos.lsu.edu).
Student Government: Student government approved Resolution 9 “To Reaffirm LSU Student Government’s Position of Opposition toward the Proposed Plus/Minus Grading System and to Advocate for Student Representation in Discussions on this Topic” by majority vote (Appendix E).

Committee on the Implementation of Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grading: The conclusions of the Ad Hoc Committee on Plus/Minus Grading were presented to Provost Stuart Bell during his meeting with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee on October 13, 2012. At his request, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Implementation of Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grading was formed by Faculty Senate President Kevin Cope. The stated mission of the committee was to make recommendations for strategic implementation of plus/minus (suffix) grading at LSU.

The committee was organized at a meeting chaired by Professor Kevin Cope on December 13, 2012. At the initial meeting, Professor Mandi Lopez was elected chair, and, by vote of the committee, the recommended target date for plus/minus (suffix) grading implementation was set for fall semester, 2014.

The following information details the tasks and assessments undertaken by the committee as well as the associated outcomes and conclusions (Committee minutes are included in Appendix B).

Tasks

1. Distribution of information to LSU students and faculty about the Committee on the Implementation of Plus/Minus “Suffix” Grading and its mission.
   
   M. Lopez, D. Chance

2. Outline and cost of an implementation strategy.

   G. Reeve, R. Doolos, P. Beste, Committee members
3. Data collection to evaluate potential impact on student grades.

W. Waggenspack, G. Knapp, T. Rodgers, D. Obrien (LSU Center for Evaluation and Assessment)

Methods

Tasks were assigned to specific Committee members, but all members were encouraged to provide input. Meetings were held on January 25, February 28, April 4 and May 1, 2013 (Appendix B) during which tasks were refined based on available results and new information. Results were compiled into a final report which was distributed to committee members for input and approval.

Task 1 – Distribution of information to LSU students and faculty about the Committee on the Implementation of Plus/Minus “Suffix” Grading and its mission.

Action Point – A message was composed and approved by the committee.

Outcome – The message was distributed via broadcast e-mail on December 19, 2012.

Broadcast E-mail to LSU Community Members About Ad Hoc Committee on the Implementation of Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grading

Dear Members of the LSU Community,

At its October 2012 meeting, the LSU Faculty Senate passed Resolution 11–20, “A Plus and Minus Grading System for LSU.” The resolution, which received a strong majority vote, calls for the establishment at LSU of a plus-minus or “suffix” grading system, such as is used by most research universities. Resolution 11–20 may be viewed online at http://www.lsu.edu/senate/resolution%2011-20%plus%20and%20minus%20grading.pdf; the report of the ad hoc committee that studied this proposal may be found at http://www.lsu.edu/senate/plus-minus%20grading%20committee%20report.pdf.

In cooperation with the Office of Academic Affairs, the faculty senate has created a task force composed of faculty members, administrators, staff, and students for the purpose of providing recommendations and direction for the implementation of the plus-minus system. During the upcoming months, this committee will be seeking input from the LSU community and will be asking for information relevant to the introduction of plus-minus grading in the many units, programs, and colleges that contribute to the LSU educational project. The committee will review the full gamut of relevant topics, including admission requirements, grade-point average calculation, and university policies and publications.

The committee, which is chaired by Professor Mandi Lopez, will look forward to and will appreciate your help with this important step in the improvement of our university. Regular progress reports will be issued through the faculty senate website and through faculty senate meetings and publications. By vote of the committee, the target date for implementation is the fall semester of 2014.

Please feel free to contact members of the committee (please see http://www.lsu.edu/senate/ad%20hoc%20committee%20on%20implementation%20of%20plus-minus%20grading.html) or your faculty senator with ideas and suggestions.
Task 2 – Outline and Cost of an Implementation Strategy

Action Points -

1) Major units, divisions and programs that could be impacted by plus/minus (suffix) grade implementation were identified by the committee.
2) Cost estimates were requested from IT Services.
3) The Office of the University Registrar located all references to grade or grade point average (GPA) requirements in the University General Catalog for 2012-2013. These requirements were then aligned with the responsible department, division, or college and a contact person identified.
4) A survey was submitted to the contact person for each of the units to determine anticipated changes in policies and procedures due to suffix grading implementation. Each survey was customized for the individual unit with the catalogue policy statements that indicated grade dependent criteria or limits specific to that unit. The polled individual was asked to respond with one of four options for each statement.

Outcomes –

1) General organizational charts of LSU components that could be impacted by plus/minus (suffix) grading were generated. One chart contains University components that have policies and conditions dependent on GPA calculation. The other includes components within Colleges that also require GPA calculation.
2) Based on information provided to the Registrar from IT services, the cost (mainframe and web processes along with database work) would be between 240 and 320 man hours ($15 - 20K) to implement suffix grading scale into current systems.

3) The Registrar’s office identified a total of 182 policy statements in the general catalog to include in the survey.

4) Respondents were primarily dean’s (academic units) or division (support units) office representatives. Thirteen out of seventeen (76%) surveys were completed (Table 1). Notably, departments that offer over 80 individual courses requiring a prerequisite of “C or better” and at least 5 requiring “B or better” were not included in the survey.

   a. There were more anticipated policy changes in Academic (148) versus Support Units (34).
   b. Only 5.5% of the responses were “other unit’s decision” indicating that policies were correctly aligned with units.
   c. Overall, the most frequent responses were “no change required” (39%) and “uncertain” (34.6%).
   d. Support Units most frequently and equally reported “change required” and “no change required” (32.3%).
   e. Academic Units reported “no change required” (40.5%) most frequently followed by “uncertain” (36.4%).
   f. Academic Units reported “change required” less frequently (18.2%) than support units (32.3%).

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Components within Colleges Requiring GPA Calculation

Estimate of the Cost to Retrofit a Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grading System into Current Systems

“How much implementing plus/minus grading will cost with respect to man hours of analyst time needed to enhance MOODLE, Web applications (e.g., mid-term/final grade reporting) and the SRR database, depends on a policy decision that is yet to be made. The policy in question is related to the database tables that are used to store minimum required grades for degree requirements and prerequisites. The issue is whether minimum grades will continued to be specified as A, B, C or D with plus/minus grades being equated to A, B, C or D. For example, C+ and C- would be considered a C for the purposes of the minimum grade requirement. If this is the case, the cost in man hours will be 120-160 hours. If this is not the case, and minimum grades are specified with pluses and/or minuses, the cost would double (i.e., 240-320 man hours). The reason for the doubling of the cost is the tables that store minimum required grades for degree requirements and prerequisites would need to be enhanced to accommodate the pluses and minuses along with modifying the processes that check these requirements.”
Table 1. Policies Anticipated to Require Change with Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grading Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Change Required</th>
<th>No Change Required</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Other Unit’s Decision</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Units</strong></td>
<td>11 (32.3%)</td>
<td>11 (32.3%)</td>
<td>9 (26.4%)</td>
<td>3 (8.8%)</td>
<td>34 (18.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Units</strong></td>
<td>27 (18.2%)</td>
<td>60 (40.5%)</td>
<td>54 (36.4%)</td>
<td>7 (4.7%)</td>
<td>148 (81.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>38 (20.9%)</td>
<td>71 (39.0%)</td>
<td>63 (34.6%)</td>
<td>10 (5.5%)</td>
<td>182 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TASK 3 - Data collection to evaluate potential impact on student grades.

Action Points –

1) Develop and administer surveys to be administered to faculty and students to capture projected grade changes with the addition grade suffixes.

2) Reduce data to demonstrate descriptive changes in overall grade distribution within college and within level.

Outcomes –

1) Two separate surveys were generated and made available to faculty and students to self-report actual individual semester grades in parallel with projected suffix grades. The cost of the survey was shared by the LSU Faculty Senate and Student Government Association.

   a. Participation was requested via broadcast email.

   b. Survey sites were made available and the process further highlighted with banners on MyLSU.

   c. Data collected included College, Course Level, Actual Grade and projected Suffix Grade. A total of 177 courses (1000-7000) and 4,165 grades were included in the faculty survey. A total of 578 students participated in the student survey, and 2,770 grades were reported.
Broadcast Email Requesting Participation in Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grading Survey

Broadcast E-mail Requesting Participation in Grade Survey

TO: MEMBERS, LSU FACULTY SENATE
CC: PROF. WARREN WAGGENSPACK

Dear Colleagues,

Below you will find an important announcement from the ad hoc University Committee that is charged with developing an implementation plan for “suffix” (+/-) grading at LSU. That Committee has prepared a survey instrument that is intended to gather data relating to the potential effects of such a grading system on actual student grades. As you will see, the survey has been designed to require minimal time and effort and to preserve anonymity. On behalf of the Faculty Senate, I join with the Committee spokesman, our colleague Warren Waggenpack, in urging you to share your grading data with the Committee by way of ensuring that LSU establishes sound grading policies.

With all good wishes,
KEVIN
Kevin L. Cope

Spring 2013 Suffix Grade Survey - Invitation to Participate

At the request of the administration, an ad hoc University Committee was formed to provide a comprehensive report on implementing suffix grading at LSU-Baton Rouge. The committee agreed that the potential to impact student outcome assessment (grades) is a meaningful component of the report. Therefore, members of the committee have designed a survey through which information from both students and faculty can be captured.

There are several points to be noted:

1) Participation is voluntary.

2) There will be no faculty, or student identity included with data collection, reduction or analysis. The College (e.g. ECCELS, ENG, WSSC) and course level (2000-3000) will be included.

3) Assigned (actual) grades and parallel suffix grades for the Spring 2013 semester on the data being collected.

4) The Suffix Grade Survey is linked through a banner that will cyclically appear at the top of the web page once you have signed on to your myLSU account. You may also be asked to provide your LSU SSM. The survey link will remain open: Wednesday May 8 through Friday May 24, 2013.

We encourage everyone to participate. Numerous data points from a variety of sources will serve to increase the value of this component of our report. At a minimum, we ask all instructors of record to consider sharing a suffix grading scale and/or results with your students as part of this exercise and independent of submitting course results through this survey.

Should you have any technical problems with participating, please email:

David O’Brien, Center for Assessment & Evaluation (dobrien@lsu.edu)
Warren Waggenpack, Faculty Representative (newwag@me.lsu.edu)
Thomas Rodgers, SGA Representative (tho403@lsu.edu).

The committee thanks you for your service to LSU and, in advance, for your participation in this important project.
My LSU Banners for Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grading Survey

Faculty Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grading Survey
Survey Results (Appendices C,D) –
Note – The reported survey results are based on projected, not actual grade changes. The surveys were based on elective participation with random and unbalanced contributions by Colleges and Units. Further, the potential impact on GPA cannot be assessed without credit hour information. Hence, the information is intended to provide a subjective “snap shot” of potential effects on grade distributions as anticipated by faculty and student volunteers.

a. In the faculty survey, 2,056 grades were projected to change with addition of a suffix (676 increased, 1,380 dropped). A total of 109 grades were anticipated to move at least two levels (44 improved, 65 dropped; B => A-, B => C+, etc). Seven grades (4 improved, 3 dropped) were expected to change by a full letter grade.

b. Of the 2,770 grade estimates provided in the student survey, 228 were anticipated to increase with addition of a suffix, and 1,253 were projected to decrease. A total of 68 students expected more grades to improve than drop and 417 students reported more grades likely to drop than improve. A total of 117 grades were estimated as likely to move at least two levels (79 improved, 38 dropped), B => A-, or B => C+, etc). Forty grades (10 improved, 30 dropped) were estimated to likely to change by a full letter grade.

c. In general, results varied among colleges and course levels. Survey results are presented in bar graph format according to College (Appendix C, Pages 20-25) and Level (Appendix C, Page 26, “Before Suffix” and “Pre” = Actual grade, “After Suffix” and “Post” = Suffix grade). College or course level
information is included in the title of each graph. Additionally, results from both surveys are presented in table format (Appendix C, Pages 27).

Summary

Information about the Committee on Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grading Implementation was submitted by numerous venues to faculty and students for potential input and feedback. Fall semester 2014 was voted as a target implementation date by the committee. The cost of retrofitting a plus/minus grading system into existing systems broadly outlined in this report is $15-$20K. Based on a survey of representatives within LSU academic and service units, adopting plus/minus (suffix) grading will require relatively little change in policies and requirements that use grades or GPA. Additional consideration is required surrounding interpretation of “C-” for TOPS and financial aid as well as performance and graduation requirements. The descriptive results of the faculty plus/minus (suffix) grade survey are provided in the appendix. It is not possible to determine potential effects of plus/minus (suffix) on GPA from the survey results since credit hour information was not collected.

Conclusions

Plus/minus (suffix) grading is currently in place at the majority of LSU peer universities surveyed including Duke, Oregon State, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, University of Mississippi, University of Missouri, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Tennessee, University of Virginia, Vanderbilt, Virginia Tech, and the University of Connecticut. Implementation of plus/minus (suffix) grading at LSU is relatively inexpensive (modest cost) and, based on the information in this report, will have minimal effects on current policies, and requirements. At this time, it is not possible to assess the potential impact on overall GPA. It is anticipated that unforeseen considerations and impact will become apparent upon implementation that will require time and effort for a smooth transition.
APPENDIX A

Faculty Senate Resolution 11-20
“A Plus and Minus Grading System for LSU”

Introduced at the request of Professor Don Chance

Whereas the appended background paper presents compelling arguments for the introduction of a plus and minus grading system as a means to increase the accuracy of the evaluation of students,

Therefore be it resolved that Louisiana State University shall adopt the plus and minus grading system proposed in the document below.

Background

LSU currently uses the grading system of A, B, C, D, and F, which provide for 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0 points, respectively. This proposal recommends that LSU convert to a system that permits the faculty member to assign + (plus) and minus (-) grades. The proposed system would allow for grades of A, A-, B+, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D- and F.

The number of quality points for a given letter grade is obviously an important question. To provide some guidance, a survey was conducted of about 80 schools, which include LSU’s peers as specified in the updated Flagship agenda program and essentially all of the most prestigious public and private research schools in the United States.

Alternative Systems

Quite a few systems were identified. Some, such as MIT’s five-point system, Brown’s no-grade system, Maryland’s system of awarding plus/minus grades but not reflecting these variations in the grade point average calculation, and Wisconsin’s A, AB, B, BC system are quite unconventional and were disregarded. Of the remaining schools, 69 use some variant of the plus/minus system while thirteen use the traditional system.

The variants of the plus/minus system include

1. A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, etc. (39 schools)
2. A = 4.0, A- = 3.67, B+ = 3.33, B = 3.0, etc. (14 schools)
3. A = 4.0, A- = 3.75, B+ = 3.25, B = 3.0, etc. (1 school)
4. A = 4.0, A- = 3.667, B+ = 3.333, B = 3.0, etc. (3 schools)
5. A = 4.0, A- = 3.666, B+ = 3.333, B = 3.0 (1 school)
Some schools give A+. The following such systems were identified:

(6) \( A^+ = 4.33, A = 4.0, A^- = 3.67 \), etc. (9 schools)
(7) \( A^+ = 4.3, A = 4.0, A^- = 3.7 \), etc. (2 schools)

Some schools allow the awarding of an A+ or an A with both worth 4.0 points, although B+ is worth more than a B. This system is still treated as a plus/minus system.

Along with LSU, the schools that use the traditional system are Auburn, Georgia Tech, Carnegie Mellon, Ohio State, Texas A&M, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, West Virginia, Arizona, Kansas State, Nebraska, and Oregon.


Proposal

It is recommended that LSU adopt the most-widely used system, which would provide for the following grade points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefits and Costs
Clearly such a change is not without cost to the university. Registrar software would need reprogramming, and it is likely that some forms would need to be re-designed. Some re-indoctrination of faculty and students would be required, although the change is not particularly complex and most everyone should catch on quickly. Another subtle cost, however, is that by having more grade cutoffs, there will be more students who will be close to the next highest grade. With quality points on the line, appeals could potentially be more frequent. On the other hand, as an example, some students who might ordinarily have gotten a B might now get a B+ and will benefit.

Indeed the main advantage would be that it would provide more flexibility to the faculty member, which should be particularly valuable in graduate classes, where there is a tremendous difference in the highest and lowest A’s and highest and lowest B’s. It also seems likely that some graduate student grades that might have been B’s will be B- or C+ or A’s might become A- or B+.

Because the old system is subsumed within the new system, any faculty member could continue to use the old system.
APPENDIX B - Minutes

Date: December 12, 2012

Time: 9:00 am

Location: Frey Hall, Room 212

Present: Kevin Cope, Mandi Lopez, Don Chance, Robert Doolos, Warren Waggenspack, Pattie Beste, Joan King, Larry Rouse, Thomas Rodgers, Gerald Knapp, Jacob Boudreaux (visitor)

Absent: Gil Reeve

1. Meeting called to order at 9:00 am.

2. K. Cope summarized mission of the committee.

3. Chair elected by the committee – M. Lopez

4. Structure of new grading system discussed.

   Unanimous vote to accept the grading system described in the final report of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on +/- grading.

5. Discussion of target implementation dates.

   Unanimous vote to target implementation for Fall 2014.

6. Discussion of potential project to compare grade distribution with proposed and established grading scales within LSU-Baton Rouge.

   W. Waggenspack, G. Knapp and T. Rodgers will investigation the potential design and feasibility and report back to the Committee at the next meeting.

7. Discussion of best mechanism to inform the University of the impending grade scale change.

   M. Lopez and D. Chance will draft a statement for University distribution.

8. Discussion of implementation of new grading scale into individual University units, organizations and programs and key personnel with unit specific knowledge about necessary updates.

   Registrar Doolos and Ms. Beste will provide a list along with contact information with which to begin the planning process for implementation of the new grading system.

Next Meeting – Last week in January, specific time based on Doodle poll results.

Adjourned 10:15 am
Date: January 25, 2013

Time: 3 pm

Location: Frey Hall, Room 213

Present: Mandi Lopez, Don Chance, Robert Doolos, Warren Waggenspack, Pattie Beste, Joan King, Thomas Rodgers, Gerald Knapp

Absent: Larry Rouse, Gil Reeve

1. Meeting called to order at 3:00 pm.

2. Minutes approved with correction – G. Knapp added to item #6 – now reads “W. Waggenspack, G. Knapp and T. Rodgers will investigation the potential design and feasibility and report back to the Committee at the next meeting.”

3. Update on progress of impact assessment if a suffix grading scale within LSU-Baton Rouge.
   a. Draft survey provided by W. Waggenspack T. Rodgers and discussed by the committee.
   b. Prospective and retrospective study options suggested.
   c. Action item – W. Waggenspack, G. Knapp and T. Rodgers will continue to explore options and feasibility and report back to the committee.

4. Plus-minus grading points of contact and comprehensive list of University policies provided by R. Doolos and P. Beste.
   a. Action item – R. Doolos office will organize catalogue information into subdivisions with associated points of contact to assist with draft of implementation strategy priority chart.

5. Brief discussion of development of priority chart discussed above. Additional items to include suggested-
   a. Student organizations, athletics

Next Meeting – Last week in February, specific time based on Doodle poll results.

Adjourned 4:30 pm
Date: February 28, 2013

Time: 3 pm

Location: Frey Hall, Room 207

Present: Mandi Lopez, Don Chance, Robert Doolos, Pattie Beste, Joan King, Thomas Rodgers, Gil Reeve, Charles Delzell, Warren Waggenspack

Absent: Gerald Knapp

1. Meeting called to order at 3:00 pm.

2. Minutes approved.

3. The committee generated an organizational chart of major University units and associated systems that may require modification for implementation of suffix grading.

   **Action Item:** M. Lopez will generate a schematic with the information. Items to be added will include estimates of the number of programs and systems within each major unit and the relative size with which to obtain feedback from Campus computing for cost estimates.

4. Discussion surrounding the best mechanism to get Unit/College specific information.

   **Action Item:** R. Doolos will finalize the point of contact for each unit. G. Reeve will contact them for an estimate of the number and magnitude of changes necessary for implementation of suffix grading. An update will be provided at the next meeting. To meet the upcoming catalogue deadline for 2014, any changes must be submitted to the Registrar’s office by Nov. 2014.

   Note – Any student program/course/honors changes must be considered and approved by the ASH and/or Courses and Curriculum committees.

5. J. King presented a summary of the programs within Athletics that will be affected by suffix grading. Minimum grade standards are set by the NCAA. Implementation of the suffix grading system may require additional student support to maintain eligibility.

6. A proposed faculty survey and tentative student survey mechanism was presented by W. Waggenspack and T. Rodgers (See below). The cost of the surveys is projected to be less than $1,000. The cost will be shared by the Faculty Senate and Student Government. Beta testing should be feasible by the end of April to capture Spring 2013 grade information.

7. Due to time constraints, P. Beste will present a summary of her recent experience at an education conference where suffix grading was a prominent topic.

Next Meeting – April 4, 212 Frey Hall, 1 pm.

Adjourned 4:15 pm
Date: April 4, 2013

Time: 1 pm

Location: Frey Hall, Room 2212

Present: Mandi Lopez, Gerald Knapp, Pattie Beste, Joan King, Gil Reeve, Charles Delzell, Warren Waggenspack

Absent: Don Chance, Robert Doolos, Thomas Rodgers, Larry Rouse

1. Meeting called to order at 1:00 pm.

2. Minutes approved with changes.

3. The strategic plan implementation strategy charts generated with committee input were presented by M. Lopez. Changes were requested by committee members and new information was added.

   **Action Item:** M. Lopez will revise the charts as requested by the committee and present them at the next meeting when new information will be added (Appendix 1).

   **Action Item:** Items to be added will include: 1) Estimates of the number of programs and systems within each major unit that will require change; 2) IT man hours and associated costs for anticipated changes.

4. Discussion about mechanism to capture individual College/Unit information that will be affected by suffix grading.

   **Action Item:** G. Reeve in association with the Registrar’s contact information within individual units will send a letter to all associate deans/contact requesting an itemized list of courses, curricula and policies that will require administrative, programmatic, printed material, or information technology changes. A response will be requested within two weeks. Information will be summarized for addition to the implementation strategy and inclusion in the final report.

5. Discussion about central administrative changes that may be affected. Those identified include: SRR database, Degree Audit database, Grade Submission application, paper transcript format.

6. Discussion about ways to generate cost estimates in conjunction with captured Unit/College, Administrative IT changes.

   **Action Item:** P. Beste will contact/work with Byron Honore to generate an outline and associated costs for SRR changes to be presented at the next committee meeting.

7. The committee under the direction of G. Reeve identified two overarching implementation strategies:

   Option A – All policies and procedures remain as they are with implementation of +/- grading (anticipated for Fall 2015) unless changes are implemented through normal procedures at the discretion of individual academic units.

   Option B – Identification of policy changes that must be implemented prior to initiation of +/- grading.

   **Action Item:** Discussion to continue at next meeting.

8. W. Waggenspack presented prototype faculty and student surveys designed to determine grade impact. Feedback was received.
**Action Item:** Committee recommendations will be incorporated and the new survey presented to the committee prior to beta testing in Spring 2013 (Appendix 2).

9. P. Beste presented information from a recent education conference. Some Universities use suffix grading as a feedback mechanism but officially record only non-suffix grades for purposes of GPA calculation and GPA dependent policies.

Next Meeting – May 1, 21 Frey Hall, 1 pm.

Adjourned 2:15 pm
Date: May 1, 2013

Time: 1 pm

Location: Frey Hall, Room 213

Present: Mandi Lopez, Pattie Beste, Joan King, Gil Reeve, Charles Delzell, Warren Waggenspack, Thomas Rodgers, Don Chance

Absent: Robert Doolos, Larry Rouse, Gerald Knapp,

1. Meeting called to order at 1:00 pm.

2. Minutes approved pending potential changes.

3. W. Waggenspack presented prototype faculty and student surveys designed to determine grade impact. Feedback included removing all references to Faculty and Student senate resolutions and to include grade point scale from Ad Hoc +/- (Suffix) Grading Committee report.

   **Action Item:** W. Waggenspack and T. Rodgers will finalize preface and student and faculty surveys and submit for final approval from the Committee prior to initiation targeted for Monday, May 6 to remain open for a total of 14 days. Data will be compiled by W. Waggenspack and submitted to M. Lopez for inclusion in final report.

4. G. Reeve presented the results of request to all associate deans and unit leaders for anticipated programmatic/IT/policy changes with suffix grading. A total of 15/20 units responded. The majority of responses indicated no change. There was concern expressed over the potential for a “C−” grade point assignment of 1.7 to have a negative effect on GPA by some respondents. It was pointed out by a Committee member that the “C+” grade point assignment of 2.3 could increase the GPA and offset any potential negative effect.

   **Action Item:** G. Reeve will provide M. Lopez a copy of the request memo for inclusion in the final report. Additionally, G. Reeve will compile the results and provide a table summary for the final report.

5. P. Beste reported on information from Byron Honore about the cost to retrofit suffix grading into the SRR, Degree Audit and Grade Submission application mainframe programs. The cost is unchanged from the Ad Hoc +/- (Suffix) Committee report and is estimated to be 240-320 man hours at a cost of $15,000-$20,000.

   **Action Item:** The information will be included in the final report.

6. M. Lopez requested feedback on the Strategic Plan Organizational Charts for +/- (Suffix) Grade Scale Implementation. There were no changes requested.

   **Action Item:** The charts will be included in the final report.

7. M. Lopez indicated that she will plan to complete the final report by the end of June. She will request input from all Committee members in the process of generating the report. It is anticipated that the report will be circulated among Committee members several times prior to finalization.

8. M. Lopez thanked the Committee members for their service and dedication.

Adjourned: 1:53 pm
Appendix C – Results of Plus/Minus (Suffix) Grade Survey

Results of Plus/Minus Grade Survey Spring Semester 2013 – By College

Before Suffix | After Suffix
---|---
ACCT Pre | ACCT Post
ANSC Pre | ANSC Post
ARCH Pre | ARCH Post
ART Pre | ART Post
ASTR Pre | ASTR Post
BADM Pre | BADM Post
BE Pre | BE Post
BIOL Pre | BIOL Post
CE Pre | CE Post
CHE Pre | CHE Post
Results of Plus/Minus Grade Survey Spring Semester 2013 – By Course Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Level</th>
<th>1000 Level Pre</th>
<th>1000 Level Post</th>
<th>4000 Level Pre</th>
<th>4000 Level Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before Suffix</td>
<td>After Suffix</td>
<td>Before Suffix</td>
<td>After Suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 Level Pre</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 Level Post</td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Level Pre</td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image12" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Level Post</td>
<td><img src="image13" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image14" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image15" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image16" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 Level Pre</td>
<td><img src="image17" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image18" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image19" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image20" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 Level Post</td>
<td><img src="image21" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image22" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image23" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image24" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before Suffix vs. After Suffix
## Appendix D – Summaries of Student and Faculty Survey Results

### Student Survey Quick Summary Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Students Participating</th>
<th>Tot # Grades Improved</th>
<th>Tot # Grades Decreased</th>
<th>Tot # Grades Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>578</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>1235</td>
<td>2770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 courses</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8 courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 or more</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net # Grades Increased</td>
<td>6 or more</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>3 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>2 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>1 or more courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68 Students reported more course grades increased than decreased
417 Reported more course grades decreased than increased

### Number of Grades Estimated To

- B to A - Increase TWO or more levels: 79
- B to A - Increase THREE or more levels: 10

Decrease TWO or more levels: => A to B+ or B to C+
Decrease THREE or more levels: => A to B or B to C

* Actual impact on GPA must account for course credit hours which was not collected with the survey.

### Faculty Survey Quick Summary Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Courses Reporting</th>
<th>177</th>
<th>4165</th>
<th>Total Grades Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Grades Decreased</td>
<td>1380</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>Total Number of Grades Increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Grades Decreased by two levels or more</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Total Number of Grades Increased by two levels or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Grades Decreased by three levels or more</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Total Number of Grades Increased by three levels or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max GP Decrease</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Max GP Increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- # A’s originally: 1619
- # A’s that dropped: 718
- # B’s originally: 1375
- # B’s that dropped: 389
- # C’s originally: 715
- # C’s that dropped: 198
- # D’s originally: 258
- # D’s that dropped: 75
- # F’s originally: 198

Total Grades Reported: 4165

**Grades Moved TWO or more LEVELS**

- A => B+ or lower: Tot A’s that dropped: 25
- B => C+: # B’s that dropped: 15
- C => D+: # C’s that dropped: 14
- A => B: # D’s that dropped: 0

**Grades Moved THREE or more LEVELS - i.e one complete letter grade**

- A => B: Tot A’s that dropped: 1
- B => C: # B’s that dropped: 3
- C => D: # C’s that dropped: 0
- A => B: # D’s that dropped: 0
Appendix E – Student Government Resolution

STUDENT SENATE
F12RS
SGR No. 9
BY: SENATOR SCHWARTZENBURG

A RESOLUTION

TO REAFFIRM LSU STUDENT GOVERNMENT'S POSITION OF OPPOSITION TOWARD THE
PROPOSED PLUS/MINUS GRADING SYSTEM AND TO ADVOCATE FOR STUDENT
REPRESENTATION IN DISCUSSIONS ON THIS TOPIC.

PARAGRAPH 1:  WHEREAS, LSU STUDENT GOVERNMENT passed student
government resolution twenty seven (27) in the Fall
2011 Regular Session which opposes the creation of a
PLUS/MINUS GRADING SYSTEM FOR LSU; and

PARAGRAPH 2:  WHEREAS, updated research along with overwhelming
student response on the issue has come forth since Fall
of 2011.

PARAGRAPH 3:  WHEREAS, currently LSU uses the following quality
POINT SCALE:
• A - 4.0 QP
• B - 3.0 QP
• C - 2.0 QP
• D - 1.0 QP
• F - 0.0 QP

PARAGRAPH 4:  WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate has passed a resolution
supporting a new PLUS/MINUS system for the distribution
of quality points that resembles the following:
• A - 4.0
• A’ - 3.7
• B’ - 3.3
• B - 3.0
• B - 2.7
• ECT., AND

PARAGRAPH 5:  WHEREAS, the vast MAJORITY OF THE LSU STUDENT BODY
is in staunch opposition to the proposed PLUS/MINUS
GRADING SYSTEM; and

PARAGRAPH 6:  WHEREAS, since January 2012, Student Government has
received more than 200 emails from students on this
topic. Approximately two percent (2%) of those emails
were from students who supported PLUS/MINUS GRADING;
and

PARAGRAPH 7:  WHEREAS, students' main objection originates from
the potential to lower grade point AVERAGES; and
Paragraph 8: WHEREAS, a lowering of grade point average of any magnitude could impact a student's ability to maintain his or her scholarship; and

Paragraph 9: WHEREAS, students losing scholarships will negatively affect retention, graduation, and completion rates at LSU, and

Paragraph 10: WHEREAS, a plus/minus system could be used to unfairly raise standards in courses; and

Paragraph 11: WHEREAS, the proposed system will have the greatest negative impact on high achieving students striving to attain superior grade point averages; and

Paragraph 12: WHEREAS, raising the standard to receive a full quality points in a course will narrow the ability of these students to attain superior grade point averages; and

Paragraph 13: WHEREAS, lowering the magnitude of any student's grade point average will decrease the competitiveness of LSU graduates seeking admission to professional and graduate programs; and

Paragraph 14: WHEREAS, students will likely avoid scheduling classes that use the plus/minus system causing unwanted scheduling bias; and

Paragraph 15: WHEREAS, implementing a grading system that is optional for instructors will cause confusion across the university; and

Paragraph 16: WHEREAS, this confusion will stem from the lack of uniformity in regards to quality point distribution among instructors, particularly instructors teaching equivalent courses; and

Paragraph 17: WHEREAS, confusion would also arise to anyone trying to compare two LSU transcripts due to this lack of uniformity; and

Paragraph 18: WHEREAS, a student representative should be present in discussions pertaining to the proposed grading system.

Paragraph 19: Therefore, be it resolved that the student government of Louisiana State University Agricultural and Mechanical College urges and requests that Louisiana State University keep the current quality point evaluation system and that student input is considered in this matter.
Paragraph 20: **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT A SUITABLE COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION BE FORWARDED TO WILLIAM JENKINS, CHANCELLOR; KEVIN COPP, PRESIDENT OF THE FACULTY SENATE; STUART BELL, UNIVERSITY PROVOST; JANE CASSIDY, VICE PROVOST OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS; AND GIL BEEVE, VICE PROVOST OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS.**

Paragraph 21: **THIS RESOLUTION SHALL TAKE EFFECT UPON PASSAGE BY A MAJORITY (1/2) VOTE OF THE LSU STUDENT SENATE AND SIGNATURE BY THE PRESIDENT, UPON LAPSE OF TIME FOR PRESIDENTIAL ACTION; OR IF VETOED BY THE PRESIDENT AND SUBSEQUENTLY APPROVED BY THE SENATE.**