

## COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC QUALITY SUMMARY OF THE PLUS/MINUS REPORT

This report was compiled from the original Plus Minus Report by the CAQ in order to provide a summary of the major questions asked by the University Senate with regard to plus/minus grading.

- One purpose of this study was to assess the impact on various student groups.
  - During the course of this trial, 36% of the students who had a cumulative 4.0 average with traditional grades would likely lose it with signed grades.
  - Fewer than 1% of students would lose financial aid under signed grading.
  - Fewer than 1% of student athletes would lose eligibility under signed grading.
  - Signed grading had no effect on students participating in honors.
  - There was insufficient data to determine if candidates for graduation would be affected by signed grades. An examination of the May 2006 graduation file found one student likely in jeopardy of not graduating.
- A second purpose was to determine the effect on a student's GPA.
  - The average difference seen during this trial was small, only about -0.025 grade points.
  - To put this number in context, a .025 difference in GPA is less than the range of a plus or a minus grade, which is .33. So a student with a B+ of 3.33 (as defined by grades on the first page of this document) would drop to a 3.305—still a B+.
  - A difference of .025 would only affect students on the absolute edge of a grade.
    - So, a student with a "B" grade of 3.0 would drop to a high B-.
- Data from this table suggest that signed grading decreased the number of "As" awarded in the spring, summer and fall terms, while modestly increasing the number of "Bs" awarded. The distribution of "C", "D", and "F" grades appears consistent with previous terms. Based on this trial, signed grading does not appear to increase grade inflation.
- Over the six terms of this grading trial, faculty participation was poor. No more than 32% of faculty elected to use signed grading exclusively. The greater part of the faculty continued to use traditional grading throughout the trial period.
- With the exception of Winter Term 2006, the distributions of signed grades were similar through the trial period. In sections that had signed grades, about 60% were not signed, 17% were plus signed, and about 24% negatively signed. A- grades outnumbered A+ grades by nearly 2 to 1, B- grades outnumbered B+ grades by about 25% while pluses and minus at the C level were about equal. College grade distributions were similar.

- Because minus grades consistently outnumbered plus grades, and because an A+ grade counts the same as a regular "A", term GPAs, computed with signed grading, tended to be lower than non-signed grades.
- About 33% of all term GPAs would be lower as a result of signed grading, while 13% would be higher.
- Data from the sub-group in this study show that about 60% of students would have a cumulative GPA loss while 16% would see a GPA gain. The average difference in cumulative GPA was small at -0.01.
- Signed grading did not appear to influence grade inflation but to some extent had the opposite effect by reducing the number of As awarded.
- There is insufficient data to estimate the full effect of signed grading on GPAs (term or cumulative) due to the relatively small number of courses that were graded using signed grades.