

Academic Standards Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2013
APPROVED

In attendance: Yasar Bodur (COE), Greg Brock (COBA), Diana Cone (Provost's Delegate), Jennie Dilworth (CHHS), Hemchand Gossai (CLASS), Bill Levernier (COBA), David Lowder (LIB), Santanu Majumdar (CLASS), Diana Sturges (CHHS), Robert Vogel (JPHCOPH), Rob Yarbrough (COSM)

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the findings of the Plus/Minus subcommittee (see attached files).

Rob Yarbrough read a statement from Registrar Velma Burden, received via email. The text reads as follows:

“The implementation and testing stages of the plus/minus system could have a tremendous impact on the current resources within the Registrar's Office. Additionally, this type of change could impact several integrated systems and cause the need to run dual systems in Banner. For example, processing of academic grades and hope grades may cause a concern. We need to involve IT Services, Academic Affairs and Financial Aid and possibly others in the discussions to determine the potential for implementation at Georgia Southern. Since this is in the early stages, we would like to have more time to research the impact on our office and gain more information regarding what would be required.”

The committee agreed that it is prudent to keep these campus entities abreast of the committee's discussions. However, the committee also agreed that implementation issues should not drive the decision of whether or not to present a motion to the full Senate for consideration.

As a point of departure, Rob Yarbrough reminded the committee that any plus/minus system would necessarily include the current A, B, C, etc. framework. Discussion centered on consistency issues within any proposed plus/minus system or framework. Santanu Majumdar expressed his concern that there may be grade consistency issues across sections of the same course, given the choice faculty would have with regards to any new system. Hemchand Gossai noted that faculty already possess a great deal of freedom and flexibility with regards to grading and issuing course grades. Yasar Bodur concurred and argued that students would know exactly what to expect because faculty presumably would include their grading policy in the course syllabus. Gossai also noted that a plus/minus system would be a more discerning and fairer system than the current grading scheme, as faculty would have more options that would more accurately reflect student performance. Diana Sturges expressed concern over being forced to use a plus/minus grading scheme in her courses. Several committee members pointed out the faculty would not be forced to use pluses and minuses as the current grading scheme would be

part of a plus/minus system and thus would still be an option. Sturges commented that she could foresee a significant amount of pressure coming from students to use pluses and minuses, which she concluded might in effect force her to use the system whether she wanted to or not.

The discussion turned to other potential negative aspects of a plus/minus system, in particular the potential for bringing down the GPAs of students who have 4.0 or something very close to it. The argument is that a student who receives an A- grade rather than an A under the current system would see a declining effect on her/his GPA. The correlative of course is that students who consistently fall in the higher end (e.g. 88-89), would benefit by potentially receiving more quality points (B+, e.g.) than they do under the current system.

Ultimately, the committee decided to move forward with a motion for implementing a plus/minus system at Georgia Southern to the Faculty Senate, tentatively slated for inclusion at the June 2013 meeting. Yarbrough reminded the committee that some details would still need to be finalized before a motion could be submitted (e.g. inclusion of an A+ grade, quality point values for grades (A- = 3.67 or 3.7)).

In closing, Rob Yarbrough informed the committee that his term on the Faculty Senate would end after the current academic year, and thus he would no longer be a member of the Academic Standards Committee. He asked that committee members who would be serving in 2013-14 consider standing for the Chair position, which is elected by majority vote of the committee's voting members (note that per recent changes to the Faculty Handbook, any voting member of the committee is eligible to serve as Chair—not only Senators).

Respectfully Submitted,

Rob Yarbrough
Chair, Academic Standards Committee (2012-13)