



Office of the Interim Dean
College of Medicine
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February 16, 2011

Dear Members of the University Senate and Health Care Colleges Council,

Attached to this letter is a Numeric Grading plan originally proposed by medical students currently enrolled within the College of Medicine. The medical students presented this plan to the College of Medicine Curriculum Committee, where it was then referred to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee and was unanimously approved. From SPPC it was referred to the First and Second Year Course Director Committee as well as the Third and Fourth Year Course Director Committee and ultimately back to the Curriculum Committee. These three faculty committees also unanimously endorsed and approved the Numeric Grading proposal. The proposal was then considered and approved by Faculty Council, representing the fifth faculty committee to give unanimous support to this student proposal.

I wish to convey my full support and approval and ask for your consideration of this proposal at your earliest convenience. This proposal has been widely vetted in the College of Medicine and has broad support among both faculty and students. Please contact me if you have any questions, thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Emery Wilson".

Emery Wilson, MD
Interim Dean
College of Medicine
138 Leader Avenue
Lexington, KY 40506-9983

Brothers, Sheila C

From: Jennings, Chester D.
Sent: Friday, April 01, 2011 11:35 AM
To: Brothers, Sheila C
Cc: Swanson, Hollie; Hager, Jacquie; Griffith, Charles H; Hartmann, Beth A; Prince, Tonya; Jennings, Chester D.
Subject: RE: Proposed Numeric Grading Plan for COM

Yes Sheila, all three statements below are correct. Our registrar does not recall a non-medical student taking one of the 800 level medical school courses since she has been here, so items #2 and #3 will be very rarely invoked, but are correct should the need arise.

CDJ

From: Brothers, Sheila C
Sent: Friday, April 01, 2011 10:31 AM
To: Jennings, Chester D.
Cc: Swanson, Hollie; Hager, Jacquie; Griffith, Charles H; Hartmann, Beth A; Prince, Tonya
Subject: RE: Proposed Numeric Grading Plan for COM

Thank you! Just to make sure we are all perfectly clear on the intent of the proposal for numeric grading, can you please confirm that my three statements below are correct? (This thread will be added to the proposal for clarity.)

1. The only COM courses that will have a numeric grading system will be 800- and 900-level courses offered by COM.
2. If a COM graduate student is enrolled in an 800- or 900-level COM course, the faculty member will offer a *numeric* grade to the COM medical student, and a *letter* grade to the COM graduate student.
3. In the event that someone from outside COM takes an 800- or 900-level COM course, the non-COM student will receive a letter grade.

Tonya, please let me know if you foresee any problems with this proposal.

Thank you,
Sheila

Staff Representative to the Board of Trustees
Office of the Senate Council
Phone: (859) 257-5872

From: Jennings, Chester D.
Sent: Friday, April 01, 2011 9:59 AM
To: Brothers, Sheila C
Cc: Swanson, Hollie; Hager, Jacquie; Griffith, Charles H; Hartmann, Beth A
Subject: RE: Proposed Numeric Grading Plan for COM

Sheila,

Thank you for your efforts on this proposal. The change to numeric grading is intended to affect all professional students (medical) in the College. It is not intended to affect graduate students. Consequently it would apply to all medical student professional courses except those that are designated Pass/Fail obviously. To the best of our knowledge, none of our courses are cross-listed with other colleges, but some of the professional courses are

cross-listed as graduate courses within the College of Medicine. When this happens the course carries an MD prefix for the professional student and a departmental prefix for the graduate student. Professional students would receive the numeric grade while graduate students would receive the letter grade. The COM registrar handles all professional student grades, while graduate student grades are routed through the department and graduate school so there is a natural split in these two groups. The COM registrar does not see a problem in handling this split of professional/graduate students within the College. We have contacted the registrar's office, I believe Jacquie was one of the contacts, and confirmed that the numeric grading is possible on transcripts. Please contact me if you need additional information. Again thanks very much.
CDJ

From: Brothers, Sheila C
Sent: Thursday, March 31, 2011 9:01 PM
To: Jennings, Chester D.
Cc: Swanson, Hollie; Hager, Jacquie
Subject: Proposed Numeric Grading Plan for COM

Hello, Darrell. I have a few questions regarding the proposal for numeric grading in the College of Medicine. This can go to committee very soon.

Will the proposed change to numeric grading affect every course in COM? Is any COM course cross-listed with a course in another college? Has the Registrar's office been contacted/consulted, and numeric grading is possible on transcripts, etc.?

Thank you,
Sheila

**COLLEGE OF MEDICINE FACULTY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, February 15, 2011
Leader Avenue, Conference Room**

Members in Attendance

Drs. Curry, Feddock, Geddes, Jackson, Jones, Peterson, Schoenberg, Springer

Members Absent

Drs. Ambati, Ballard, Cambi, Fahy, Telling

Guests

Dr. Carol Elam, Dr. Chipper Griffith, Dr. Darrell Jennings

- The meeting was called to order at 5:02 PM
- The minutes from the January 18, 2011 Faculty Council meeting were approved with one minor revision (paragraph 1; “biochemistry” should be substituted for “microbiology” professor)
- Dr. Carol Elam presented an overview of the College of Medicine Admissions Committee activities. The number of applications remains high and the academic credentials (MCAT scores; GPA) of each entering class continue to rise. UK College of Medicine is still an attractive option for out-of-state students despite the fact that tuition is higher than many of our benchmarks. The committee has adopted a number of innovations including Share-point access to student application files and electronic (SRS) voting. Dr. Elam made an appeal for more faculty involvement in the interview process.
- Dr. Chipper Griffith presented a proposal to replace the current letter grade system for medical students with a numeric system. This system is already in place in many medical schools; it provides a more accurate indication of class rank and therefore will be of particular benefit to students for residency applications. The proposal was approved unanimously.
- Dr. Darrell Jennings presented a proposal for a new fourth year elective course, MED 867: Patient Safety and Systems Analysis. The proposal was approved unanimously.
- Dr. Jackson reported on a meeting that he and Dr. Fahy attended with the Title Series Assessments and Recommendations Task Force which had been charged with reviewing the current faculty title-series structure in place within the College of Medicine. Given the current economic climate the Task Force has elected to focus exclusively on the Clinical Title Series (CTS). An open invitation to all future meetings has been extended to Faculty Council

members as we continue to address the issue of percent CTS faculty relative to tenure-track title series faculty within the college.

- Dr. Jones presented a proposal to modify the rules governing membership of the College of Medicine Admissions Committee, in order to add flexibility to the current requirement that this committee should include a Faculty council member. Lacking quorum at this point, no vote was taken.
- The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 PM.

NUMERIC GRADING PROPOSAL

Proposal: Replace our current letter grade system with a numeric system, still retaining course director determination of the numeric grade below which constitutes failure, to be instituted for the incoming first year class this Fall, the Class of 2015 (Example: students will no longer receive As or Bs or Cs in courses, merely an 88 or 91. Each course may designate the number which would constitute a U or E grade however, so below a 70 may be a number chosen by some courses as unsatisfactory performance).

Pros

1. **High Bs (or Cs) would not have such a large effect on class rank.** In our current system, we have many students who consistently make high Bs, but have a much lower class rank than those who consistently score maybe a point or two higher in courses, but get the low As. The difference can be that of first versus fourth quartile even, given our median GPA near 3.5. It seems wrong for a student with an average of 89 to be in the 4th quartile when one with consistent 90s is in the 1st quartile, given the emphasis on class rank in many residency programs.
2. **Student disagreement with faculty about grades would lessen, and this would improve the learning environment, and improve faculty-student relationships.** In general, faculty-student relationships are good. However, since a point can make the difference between an A or B, students fight for points, argue even, resulting in sometimes tense relationships. If a point makes no large difference in GPA, these disagreements or arguments would disappear, further improving faculty-student relationships, and therefore improving the overall learning environment. It is conceivable that the Student Liaison Committees would be obsolete, as challenges about questions would not be so paramount for some students, if one question did not change class rank so much. A corollary to this is that faculty time pressures would be lessened, not having to spend time with grade appeals and question challenges.
3. **Students would learn each courses material to the full extent they can, something they don't do now.** Students readily admit they "game" the system on end-of-course exams, such that if a student has a safe B in histology, but no chance for an A, they will study mainly anatomy, if that is the class they have the most chance to change the letter grade in. But this would, in this example, result in inferior learning of histology. If students simply get a numeric value, the incentive is to score as well as they can on all exams, and learn all material equally well.
4. **The SPPC already focuses on numeric values.** The SPPC already is more concerned about students with a 71, near U, than a 79, near B.
5. **Course directors retain the ability to determine unsatisfactory performance.** In a pure numeric system, there is simply a numeric average, no determination of pass/fail threshold. This proposal retains course director authority to determine unsatisfactory performance.

Cons

1. **Some compulsive students will argue about points even more (i.e. demand a 95 versus a 94).**
This is possible. However, it's much less stressful for a course director to dismiss a request of 95 versus 94 (since really, they are both great scores, are any of us really 95s?) than it is to assign an 89, B, versus 90, A, knowing the great difference in GPA this makes.
2. **Decisions for promotion for the SPPC will be more complicated, without the "hard" rules of marginal versus unsatisfactory GPA.** This is true, but the decisions will be even more complex with the addition of the subject exams anyway (the situation of the student with Cs in courses but above national average subject exam scores). The SPPC will need to consider how best to determine lines of marginal performance (i.e. the student who does not fail a course, but scores low C across many courses; the SPPC may determine that, say, an average of 72 across courses requires repeating, even though all classes may have been marginally passed)

Lindsay, Jim D.

From: Jennings, Chester D.
Sent: Thursday, February 17, 2011 1:58 PM
To: Lindsay, Jim D.
Cc: Tauffener, Brandi L; Griffith, Charles H
Subject: RE:

We came to the same conclusion. Thanks! Any help in moving this along is appreciated!
CDJ

From: Lindsay, Jim D.
Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2011 5:29 PM
To: Jennings, Chester D.
Subject: RE:

Hi Darrell...

It appears that this will indeed require the Senate Council approval as it will be a change in Senate Rules.

Thanks,

Jim

Jim Lindsay
Health Care Colleges Council Coordinator
Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs Office
University of Kentucky, 205 Frazee Hall
Lexington, KY 40506-0031 Ph. (859) 323.6638
www.uky.edu/Provost/AcademicCouncil/council.php

From: Jones, Davy
Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2011 1:51 PM
To: Jennings, Chester D.
Cc: Griffith, Charles H; Tauffener, Brandi L; Lindsay, Jim D.
Subject: RE:

Darrell,

The view of the University Senate is that it has a responsibility to ensure quality control University-wide on the educational policies of programs concerning grades. E.g., that a faculty in a program don't degrade standards with a policy that 'in our program, we abolish the grade of E so that none of our students will fail.' In that context, the University Senate Rules provide a University-wide grade policy, and then contains in those Rules the provisions under which specific colleges have been granted exceptions to those Rules. The grade system that the College of Medicine in 1986 requested 'exception' provision to use are on pages 111-112 of the University Senate Rules, at this link:

http://www.uky.edu/Faculty/Senate/rules_regulations/Rules%20Versions/MASTER%20RULES%20from%20September%202009_clean.pdf

Davy

Cc: Senate Rules and Elections Committee

From: Jennings, Chester D.
Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2011 1:41 PM
To: Jones, Davy
Cc: Griffith, Charles H; Tauffener, Brandi L; Lindsay, Jim D.
Subject:

Davey,

Can you send me the reference or relevant section from the senate rules from 1986 regarding College of MEdicine grading policy to which you referred yesterday. I have forwarded the grading policy change document and the Dean's cover letter of approval on to Jim Lindsay with the HCCC and he would like to look at the section you quoted. Also, do you know, is there a specific senate rule delineating the grading policy for each individual college? Jim and I were not sure about that either? Thanks!

CDJ

Lindsay, Jim D.

From: Jennings, Chester D.
Sent: Monday, February 21, 2011 10:11 AM
To: Jones, Davy
Cc: Griffith, Charles H; Tauffener, Brandi L; Lindsay, Jim D.; Ambati, Jayakrishna; Ballard, Hubert O; Cambi, Franca; Curry, Thomas E; Feddock, Christopher A; Geddes, James; Jackson, Brian A; Peterson, Martha L; Schoenberg, Nancy E; Springer, Joe E; Telling, Glenn
Subject: RE: New COM Grading System

Thanks! This should help us move this along more efficiently. Jim, is it appropriate to give this committee a heads up as HCCC considers the proposal?

CDJ

From: Jones, Davy
Sent: Friday, February 18, 2011 9:17 AM
To: Jennings, Chester D.
Cc: Griffith, Charles H; Tauffener, Brandi L; Lindsay, Jim D.; Ambati, Jayakrishna; Ballard, Hubert O; Cambi, Franca; Curry, Thomas E; Feddock, Christopher A; Geddes, James; Jackson, Brian A; Peterson, Martha L; Schoenberg, Nancy E; Springer, Joe E; Telling, Glenn
Subject: RE: New COM Grading System

Darrell and Chipper,

As more background info for you, it is likely that above the level of the HCCC, it will be the Senate Admissions and Academic Standards Committee that will review, just prior to the Senate, a proposal to change the grading system. Here is a link to that committee, and you can see it has on its plate this year a proposal from Pharmacy for a new type of grade.

http://www.uky.edu/Faculty/Senate/committees_councils/standing_committees/admissions_academic_standards.htm

Davy

From: Jennings, Chester D.
Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2011 1:41 PM
To: Jones, Davy
Cc: Griffith, Charles H; Tauffener, Brandi L; Lindsay, Jim D.
Subject:

Davey,

Can you send me the reference or relevant section from the senate rules from 1986 regarding College of MEdicine grading policy to which you referred yesterday. I have forwarded the grading policy change document and the Dean's cover letter of approval on to Jim Lindsay with the HCCC and he would like to look at the section you quoted. Also, do you know, is there a specific senate rule delineating the grading policy for each individual college? Jim and I were not sure about that either? Thanks!

CDJ

5.1.2.3 College of Medicine [US: 3/10/86]

All professional program (MD degree) courses in the College of Medicine will determine a minimum level of competency. Courses taken for grade will reflect student performance with a numeric value of three significant digits between 0.700 and 1.00 (70.0%-100%) for those students achieving minimum competency. The course performance will be valued at the achieved numeric performance for each credit hour. Students failing to achieve minimum competency will receive one of the grades below. For courses taken on a pass/fail basis, the achievement of minimum competency will be the only determination.

Class rank will be determined by multiplying the numeric value assigned for each course by the total number of credit hours for that course and summing all courses taken for grade. Pass/Fail courses will not contribute to determination of class rank.

~~A ——— Represents exceptionally high achievement in performance. It is valued at four (4) quality points for each credit hour.~~

~~B ——— Represents the expected level of achievement or performance in each course. This grade reflects student competence in all areas of course requirements. It is valued at three (3) quality points for each credit hour.~~

~~C ——— Represents marginal performance. It is valued at two (2) quality points for each credit hour.~~

E Represents failure to achieve minimum competency and unacceptable performance in a numerically graded or pass/fail course. It is valued at zero (0) quality points for each credit hour.

P Represents achievement of minimum competency and a passing grade in a course taken on a pass/fail basis. It is not used in quality point calculations.

W Denotes withdrawal from the college or from an elective course. W must be approved or recommended by the Student Progress and Promotion Committee. Withdrawal from a required course is not permitted, except when a student withdraws from the college. A student may withdraw from an elective and the W will remain on the record.

U Represents unsatisfactory performance in a specific area of course requirements. It is conferred instead of an E grade when evidence exists that the student might earn a passing grade (0.700 or above) upon completion of make-up work. In the interim the U will be valued at one quality point between 0.600 and 0.699 depending on student performance for each credit hour. The temporary grade must be made-up replaced with a permanent grade before the student can be promoted to the next year of the curriculum. The quality point calculation will then be utilize the average of the U and the numeric grade conferred after the make-up. Failure to satisfactorily make up the work will result in the assignment of an E grade as described above. [US: 3/18/96]

I Represents incomplete work at the time grades are submitted for courses. It is conferred only when there is a reasonable possibility that a grade of C or better will be earned upon completion of the work. All I grades in required courses must be removed-replaced by a passing grade before a student can be promoted to a subsequent year. If a student later withdraws from the College, an outstanding 'I' grade can revert to a W grade at the discretion of the Student Progress and Promotion Committee.