

Dr. Kathleen Shannon

I would like to make a motion to amend the motion accepting the Academic Policies recommendation to change the grading system. The amendment I propose is to replace the first grading system which includes the grades of C-, D+ and D-:

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>GPA Value</b>
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1.0
D-	.7
F	0

with the alternative system below; this one does not include C-, D+ and D-.

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>GPA Value</b>
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
D	1.0
F	0

## Rationale:

The majority of the comments favoring a change to the plus minus system have to do with the difference between a B+ and a B-, and the majority of our students (and all who we allow to graduate) fall in the GPA range where we would be increasing the granularity of our grading system using the second system. The comment that I personally found the most compelling argument in favor of a change was:

- Grades, at root, are meant to be a prod/reward to help encourage students to put in the effort to master sometimes difficult material. A more nuanced grading system would result in my students, at least, studying more and getting more out of my courses. This is particularly the case with final examinations. Typically, my final exams are worth about 25% of their total grade. All too often the following (or some variant thereof) occurs: headed into the final, John, a good student, has an 86.67% - or, 65 out of 75 available points. Doing the math, John quickly realizes that if he gets a 60% on the final exam, he'll get a B in the course. If he gets a 70% on the final exam, he'll get a B in the course. If he gets an 80% on the final exam, he'll get a B in the course. If he gets a 90% on the final exam, he'll get a B in the course. If he gets a 99% on the final exam, he'll get a B in the course. If he gets a 100% on the final exam, he'll get an A. John realizes that a 100% is pretty much impossible, but he can get a 60% with practically no effort (he is, after all, a good student and has been keeping up with the coursework). Thus, John does not study for the final exam, gets a 65%, and gets his B. This is SO frustrating to me! If we had plus minus grades, John would realize that if he got a 60-69%, he'd get a B-. That is certainly to be avoided. If he got a 70-89%, he'd get a B, but if he got a 90% or higher, he'd get a B+. A 90% is certainly reachable, and John would study for that B+ grade. Thus - I would argue strongly that +/- grading would help with the central mission of any university - educating our students.

I have had similar experiences and I do feel that, rather than disadvantaging our strongest students, the possibility of falling to an A- would provide an additional challenge and encourage them to study for the final and perform well on course capstones that bring the material together at the end. However, I do not feel that this argument is compelling at the lower end of the scale.

The student who is struggling to get that C would be discouraged and perhaps even dismissed when s/he gets a C- instead. While I do see the difference between a high B student and a low B student, there isn't that much to choose between a High D and a low D. I do not see a need for more than two "unsatisfactory" grades: one, D, which indicates that although the student has not mastered the material sufficiently to continue in the subject, there was enough learning to justify receiving credit (as long as the student balances this out with better than minimally acceptable performance in another class) and one, F, which indicates that the performance of the student was not sufficient to justify credit for the course at all.

I do not see how the addition of a C- grade can fail to impact retention (and suspect that this is the reason that the grade was administratively removed at Towson). It will not aid students on probation since the likelihood is that they would receive a C- instead of a C not instead of a D. Furthermore, it is this grade that will lead to a necessary increase in curriculum paperwork to redefine "C or better" in various programs. While faculty continually review their programs and there is an ongoing process of curriculum revision, it is not an advantage to have an external action which leads to a necessary revision which was not prompted by the natural program review process. I have had faculty tell me that they would support a change ONLY IF it did not increase faculty workload and the addition of a C- grade would do that. D+ and D- grades simply seem absurd to me. How much gradation do we need in unacceptable but barely passing?

Other points in support of the amendment:

- This is a compromise position. Instead of going from 5 grades to 12 we go from 5 to 9. If faculty feel strongly at a later date that the difference between a low C and a Middle C is too large to have the same grade or if the difference between a D- and a D+ becomes marked we can always add those grades later.
- There is symmetry in having only a - in the A range and only a + in the C range.
- With this system, we encourage the students who are struggling and challenge those who need challenging.