The University of Georgia

University Council
Athens, Georgia 30602

October 10, 2012

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE – 2012-2013
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Law – No representative
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Social Work – Dr. Kristina Jaskyte
Veterinary Medicine - Dr. Scott A. Brown
Graduate School - Dr. Tracie E. Costantino
Ex-Officio – Provost Jere W. Morehead
Undergraduate Student Representative – Mr. Pranay Udutha
Graduate Student Representative – Mr. Garrett Jaeger

Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal to change the plus/minus grading scale to include A+ will be an agenda item for the October 17, 2012, Full University Curriculum Committee.

Sincerely,

David E. Shipley, Chair
University Curriculum Committee

cc: Provost Jere W. Morehead
Dr. Laura D. Jolly

Student Government Association
Proposal to Change Plus/Minus Grading Scale to Include A+

Action

The Student Government Association proposes the implementation of an A+ in the grading scale. On a 4.0 scale, the A+ would be weighted as a 4.0. No other GPA equivalencies of letter grades would be altered by this proposal. As with all other decisions regarding individual course grading, the option to assign an A+ will be left to the discretion of instructors.

Due to the current moratorium on changes in the legacy student information system during the Banner Student Information System transition, we propose that this policy be implemented in the new Banner Student Information System.

Reasoning

When the University implemented plus/minus grading, one of the primary motivations was to accurately depict a student's success in a given course. Unlike B+ and C+ students, the top students cannot distinguish their work due to the lack of an A+.

The A+ is also not unprecedented at the University of Georgia. The Law School has assigned an A+ for at least twenty years to outstanding students. Professors are given free discretion as to whether or not they will assign an A+, and the grade signifies tremendous success in the course.

While we propose that an A+ be added without any further GPA distinction, benefits exist for those who may receive an A+. Many professional and graduate schools convert the distinction of an A+ to a GPA above 4.0 regardless of its computation in an institution's GPA. Our current system may put the University's best students at a competitive disadvantage to other top students who had the potential to earn an A+.

Furthermore, an A+ allows for significant distinction in possible letters of recommendation. A professor who assigns A+ to only the few most deserving and outstanding students can more quantifiably write of the students' success in his or her course when compared to others. This has been seen with the Law School's designation of the A+.

This proposal has been unanimously endorsed by the Student Government Association Senate, the representative voice of the student body. Please see the included documents for more information.

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Institutional Comparison

Of all peer aspirational and comparator institutions, as well as SEC and Ivy League Schools, 75% currently employ a plus/minus grading system [1]. Of these institutions implementing a plus/minus system, 20/36 have an A+ distinction in place [1].

Of UGA's twelve aspirational peer institutions, six have implemented an A+ distinction, and five of these aspirational peer institutions assign an A+ a 4.0 [2]. If adopted with a numerical conversion of 4.0, the adoption of an A+ distinction would not be a significant, fundamental change to UGA's internal GPA calculation. Assigning the A+ a 4.0 GPA would not alter the grade distribution nor inflate grades and would follow precedent of several peer aspirational and comparator institutions. Furthermore, Section 3.5.1.1 of the USG Board of Regents Policy Manual approves specific grades for the determination of the Grade Point Average [3]; however, no restrictions are placed on grades which will not alter the given grading scale.

Two institutions in the University System of Georgia use the plus/minus grading system: the University of Georgia and Georgia State University. Georgia State University allows for the awarding of an A+ that is calculated as a 4.30 on a numerical scale. *(Source= BOR Policy 3.5.1.1)*

Sources:

[1] Comprehensive Solutions to the Current Plus/Minus Grading System at the University of Georgia, Ashley Casey & Andrew Singleton, December 4, 2011
[2] http://www.lsac.org/members/transcriptkeys/igugs-search.aspx
[3] http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section3/C340

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Supporting Documents

Aspirational Peer Institutions' Grading Scales

A+=4.0	A+=4.33	No A+	AB System*
U.C.- Berkeley	Cornell	Minnesota	Wisconsin
UCLA		North Carolina	
Illinois		Texas	
Michigan		Washington	
Virginia		Penn State	

Comparator Peer Institutions' Grading Scales

A+=4.0	A+=4.33	No A+	No Plus/Minus
U.C.- Davis	N.C. State	Florida	Louisiana State
Missouri	Iowa	Iowa State	Michigan State
Maryland		Ohio State	Arizona
		Kentucky	

SEC Conference Institutions' Grading Scales

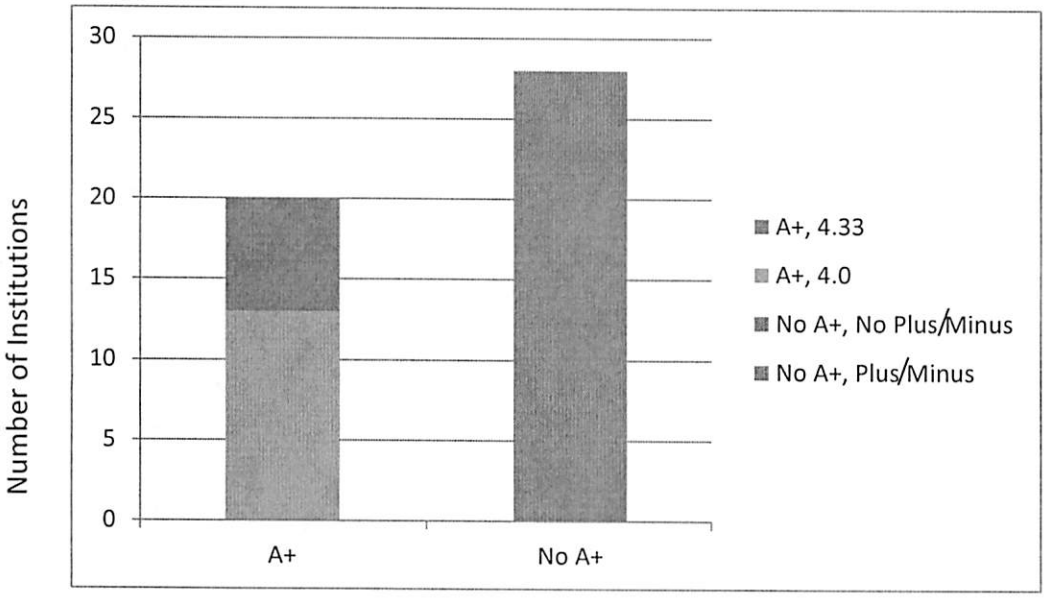
A+=4.0	A+=4.33	No A+	No Plus/Minus
Missouri	Alabama	Florida	Texas A & M
Vanderbilt		Ole Miss	Mississippi State
		Kentucky	South Carolina
		Tennessee	Arkansas
			Louisiana State

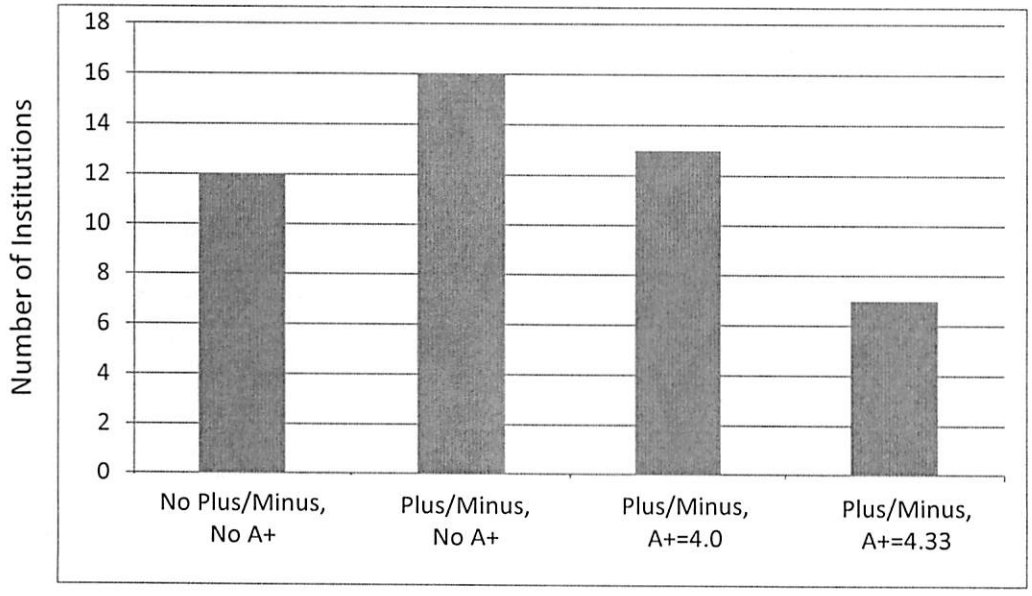
*An AB system assigns an A, AB, B, BC, C, D, and F. An AB is a 3.5 and correlates with an 87-93 grade range.

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Institutional Grading Scale Analysis
Peer Comparator & Aspirational Institutions, SEC, and Ivy League

Composite View





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Resolution 25-01

*Passed **unanimously** by the SGA Senate on September 4th, 2012*

A resolution to encourage the implementation of an A+ distinction

Authored by Senator Pranay Udutha, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences

WHEREAS, of all peer aspirational and comparator institutions, as well as SEC and Ivy League Schools, 75% currently employ a plus/minus grading system [1]; and

WHEREAS, of all aspirational and comparator peer institutions, as well as SEC and Ivy League Schools, implementing a plus/minus system, 20/36 have an A+ distinction in place [1]; and

WHEREAS, several professional and graduate schools recalculate an A+ to designate a GPA above a 4.0, thereby disadvantaging high achieving students whose schools did not assign an A+; and

WHEREAS, of UGA's twelve aspirational peer institutions, six have implemented an A+ distinction and five of these aspirational peer institutions assign an A+ a 4.0 [2]; and

WHEREAS, 11 of UGA's 20 peer aspirational and comparator institutions use an A+ distinction [2]; and

WHEREAS, given this model, the adoption of an A+ distinction would not be a significant, fundamental change to UGA's internal GPA calculation; and

WHEREAS, assigning the A+ a 4.0 GPA would not alter the grade distribution nor inflate grades and would follow precedent of several aspirational and comparator peer institutions; and

WHEREAS, the lack of an A+ distinction hurts the most successful students in their pursuit of post-graduate opportunities.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, the Student Government Association of the University of Georgia, urge the University Council and the administration to incorporate an A+ distinction into the grading scale.