

corrected minutes

Highlights

- [ACHE viability issues](#)
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- [Outreach revisions in Faculty Handbook](#)
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- [AIME building design concerns](#)
- [Revamping the Core Curriculum](#)

3:30pm --- Ferguson Forum

- Senate Roll Call & Quorum Check --- (*Ray White*)
 - Senators absent: Laszlo Baksay, Harvey Kline, Lori McKinnon, Ed Ellis, Marcia Winter
- Approval/Correction of September Minutes --- (*Ray White*)
 - September minutes were approved without correction
- **President's Report** --- (*Rob Ingram for Margaret Garner*)
 - **ACHE viability issues**

The Steering Committee had a productive and informative meeting with the Provost on October 15th. The ACHE viability issue and our current status were discussed. It is well known that over the past 5 years about 94 programs have been discontinued. The Provost shared with the steering committee the current status of degree programs at the baccalaureate, masters and doctoral levels. There are plans to: 1) request exemptions for some core liberal arts programs which are critical to a comprehensive university, 2) request waivers for some programs because of their uniqueness and lack of duplication in the state, 3) enhance some programs to improve their viability, and 4. consolidate a few programs. Faculty and administrative input at the divisional and departmental levels are important in the decisions ahead.

Teaching Technology & Distance Learning Concerns

The Steering Committee also shared with the Provost concerns about the overall planning and implementation for technology support and maintenance and distance learning. The initiative needs a coordinated effort campus-wide to encourage and assist faculty in making web based courses more available. The Provost is going to address the issue with Dr. John Snider. She indicated that she and Dr. Sorensen are supportive of this effort and that there is a proposal under consideration to fund faculty development training in the use of this technology which is viewed as mutually beneficial to residential students as well as students through distance learning. We can expect to hear more on this subject.

Federal dollars support new science building

Dr. Sorensen asked that I share with you some good news. Through the help of Sen. Shelby, 13.5 million dollars have been made available to UA in support of the much-needed Science Building. Proposals had been presented to the Board of Trustees earlier but final approval was dependent on securing additional federal dollars. He indicated he would like to share the plans with the Senate in the near future on the modular aspects of this new design in science facilities for higher education.

Update on the Quality Initiative

Dr. John Dew, Director of the Quality Improvement Initiative, has share with me that since the Quality Forum, 4 academic units of the University have requested facilitation with either strategic planning, program / curricular review or other initiatives. These requests appear to be a very positive response to the session led by Dr. Warren Porter, who was a strong advocate for ways the academic side of the institution might benefit from the support offered through the office of Quality Improvement. At the first Quality Council meeting recently, 6 potential initiatives were identified. These are reported today by VP Rob Ingram who is also a member of the Quality Council.

Outreach Document

A few minor changes to the Outreach Document have been negotiated with the subcommittee of the Council of Deans meeting with Amy Ward and me. We fully expect to hear from Dr. Barrett this week and can bring this issue to a close. At that time we will have completed all remaining issues between the Faculty Senate and the Provost regarding the proposed revisions to the Faculty Handbook. It is our hope that this project can also be completed in the very near future.

Announcements of Senate Representatives on new Task Forces.

A few task forces have been formed by the Office of Academic Affairs to address some specific issues.

- Commencement Planning---Karla Carmichael
- Computer Resources for students---Phillip Johnson
- Kiosk Technology Task Force-----Don DeSmet
- University Studies Project Team ---William Doty

• Vice President's Report --- (Rob Ingram)

- CQI update --- [[attachment](#)]

Rob Ingram reported on [six Continuous Quality Improvement projects](#) which will be undertaken to initiate the University's Quality program, under the leadership of John Dew, Director of Quality. Rob invited all faculty who are interested in participating in any of these projects to e-mail him or John Dew.

Norm Stein expressed concern about the customer service orientation of the 2nd CQI project. Stein objected to referring to students as customers and questioned whether it was appropriate to consider the academic mission of the university as a "service."

Stein requested a straw vote on the concern over the spread of such a customer orientation to the academic side. A nearly unanimous vote supported Stein's concern

• Reports from Senate Committees:

- Academic Affairs --- (Marvin Johnson & Marion Paris)
 - Update on +/- grading system --- [[attachment](#)]
 - Marvin Johnson introduced some [background data](#) regarding grading systems among our regional peer institutions; Johnson also introduced recommended Senate resolutions regarding the +/- grading system. The proposed resolution calls for a faculty referendum on the +/- grading system and further proposes that the faculty debate be limited to three options for grading systems: 1) keep the current +/- system; 2) abandon the +/- quality points; 3) use a modified system where the possible grades are A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, D, F. Further discussion was deferred until the New Business part of the agenda.
 - Members of the Academic Affairs Committee have thus far interviewed 4 of 7 candidates for the directorship of the Teaching & Learning Center
 - **Transfer of Health Studies & Athletic Training** from College of Education to College of Human & Environmental Sciences --- (see www.ua.edu/facsen/corr/health.html)
 - Marion Paris provided some background on this administrative transfer, which was mutually consensual. The official Senate reponse, as mandated by the [Principles and Procedures for the](#)

Merger or Discontinuance of Academic Units, will take the form of a resolution introduced under New Business.

- **Financial Affairs** --- (*Robert McLeod & David Arnold*)
 - Robert McLeod reported that the Financial Affairs Committee will be reviewing several issues, including:
 - Analyzing university profit centers such as Housing, the Supe Store, Athletics & Telecommunications to see how profits are distributed
 - The dental care aspects of our insurance plan
 - assessing whether the recent salary increase ameliorated the salary compression which was documented last year
 - In addition, McLeod reported that the Faculty & Staff Benefits advisory committee will look at recent changes in our insurance plan's mental health coverage
- **Planning & Operations** --- (*Jerry Webster*)
 - **AIME building design concerns**

Concern was expressed over the design of AIME (Alabama Institute for Manufacturing Excellence) building. Two faculty groups, the Master Plan Committee and the Faculty Senate Steering Committee, are disappointed in the most recent drawings of the proposed AIME building. Their view is that the building neither reflects the existing architecture of the University nor is a very interesting architectural departure from existing architecture. Both committees also are very concerned about the flat roofs proposed for the AIME building, given the leaky legacy of flat roofs on this campus and in this rainy region. The university has historically been hard pressed to maintain/repair its existing buildings with leaky flat roofs. Peter Clark responded to the flat roof concern by pointing out that the roofs are designed to be flat to accommodate ventilation hoods, which would not be able to be plumbed with pitched roofs

- **Research & Service** --- (*Bing Blewitt & Betty Bryce*)
 - **"variable teaching loads" issue dropped**

Bing Blewitt reported that the Research & Service committee is dropping the issue of Faculty Handbook language on how "variable teaching loads" are to be considered in evaluations for promotion, tenure and salary raises. The committee has unanimously agreed to drop the issue.

- **Student Affairs** --- (*Bob Sigler & Mike Miller*)
 - Bob Sigler reiterated that the Greek Diversity Task Force report is a step in right direction for fraternities and sororities on campus.
 - Sigler also reported that the committee is considering whether to respond in some way to the recent homophobic hate crime in Wyoming, which resulted in the death of a gay student.
- **Senate Operations** --- (*Nick Stinnet*) --- no report

• **Reports from Senators on University Standing Committees**

- **Student Life Committee** --- Bob Sigler
 - Bob Sigler reported on several items of business, including
 - a proposed extension of University social hours to 2am, which is resisted by the University Police department due to staffing constraints
 - the committee will investigate whether there is adult supervision of greek parties
 - the committee will try to do something about the poor lighting on Jefferson Avenue, which is thought to contribute to several recent car break ins
- **Campus Master Plan** --- (*Jerry Webster*)
 - Master Plan update at bama.ua.edu/~landmgt/planupdate.htm
 - other documents related to Master Plan update at www.ua.edu/facsen/docs/docs.html
- **Staff Development Committee** --- (*Lee Pike*)

The committee will be expanding its employee recognition awards. Pike asked the Senate to think about whether faculty should be included for consideration as possible recipients of such awards or whether

such awards should be restricted to staff members. Pike will solicit opinions at a future Senate meeting.

• Reports from other Committees

- **Legislative Agenda** --- (*Scott Bridges*)

Scott Bridges reported that there seems to be considerable faculty involvement in legislative campaigns. Undergraduates are also very involved and interested in the education issue. Last week there was a well attended debate between Phil Poole & his challenger. Bridges reminded faculty to vote and asked that faculty also remind their students to vote.

- **Commencement Planning** --- (*Karla Carmichael*) --- [[see attachment](#)]
- **Human Relations Council** --- (*Debbie Novak*)--- [[see attachment](#)]
- **University Studies Project Team** --- (*William Doty*)

The very large number of core-designated courses at the University has prompted the University President and Provost to convene a University Studies Project Team to revamp the core curriculum.

- Recent Faculty Senate representatives appointed to ad hoc university Task Forces:
 - **Kiosk Technology Task Force** --- Don DeSmet
 - **Computer Resources for Students** --- Philip Johnson
 - **University Studies Project Team** --- William Doty

• OLD Business

- we are still waiting for the Deans' response to the Senate's proposed Outreach revisions to the Faculty Handbook --- (*Rob Ingram*)
 - *NOTE:* shortly after the Senate meeting, Margaret Garner heard that the Deans have accepted the proposed Outreach revisions to the Handbook, so the Handbook revisions should now be done.

• NEW Business

- **Faculty Referendum on +/- Grading System**

Marvin Johnson reintroduced the +/- grading issue by continuing to review the [background data](#) on grading systems at peer institutions and the statistics on the impact of the +/- system at UA. For example, our current system is also used at the University of Virginia, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke, Emory, Vanderbilt & Tulane. Johnson also formally introduced a [three part resolution](#) calling for a University wide referendum for a review of the +/- system. The proposed resolution calls for a faculty referendum on the university grading system; the proposed resolution further suggests that the faculty debate be limited to discussing three alternative grading options:

1. keep the current +/- system
2. abandon the +/- quality points
3. adopt a grading system of A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, D, F

Johnson pointed out that the grading system of option (3) retains the incentive structure of the current +/- system, without having the apparent problems associated with A- not being offset by A+ and also with having a C- average not being sufficient for satisfying some major qualifications, despite it appearing to be a "C." Johnson further pointed out that this system is used by University of Tennessee, the University of Florida and the University of South Carolina.

A wide ranging discussion followed. Nick Stinnett reminded the faculty that when this came up years ago, very few faculty actually voted. Also, there was apparently some confusion between some colleges on how it would be implemented. Rob Ingram commented that the divergence of opinion warrants a faculty review. Norm Stein recalled that when it was implemented, there was an immediate outcry from students, who requested a second referendum. The response was to wait to see how the new system panned out, to see if controversy remains, which it obviously has. Peter Clark said that the current +/- system is unfair, since grades of A- cannot be offset by A+, so a single A- among grades of A and A+ will result in a GPA that is less than 4.0. More discussion ensued. Clark further suggested that companies assessing our

undergraduates are confused by our grading system. Johnson asked whether such companies are similarly confused by Vanderbilt undergraduates who have the same grading system. Other faculty contributed to the discussion by suggesting that there is little performance difference between students who receive C+ and those who receive C-, for example, so why make the distinction? Still others said the opposite, that there can be a very significant performance difference between those awarded C+ versus those awarded C-. Rob Ingram noted that there seemed to be little consensus within the Senate on what to do with the grading system, which simply emphasized the need to bring this issue to the faculty at large. Attention was then drawn to the specific resolution(s) brought to the Senate by the Academic Affairs committee.

Ingram proposed that the three parts of the [proposed resolution\(s\)](#) to call for a faculty referendum be combined into one, which was approved unanimously. Others pointed out that, given the lack of consensus in the Senate about what grading system should be adopted, the Senate should not attempt to limit any faculty debate to the three grading options proposed. This part of the proposed resolution was subsequently deleted. After further amendments to the wording of the resolution, the Senate finally voted on the [resolution below](#), which simply calls for a faculty referendum on the University's grading system, with the debate period to last at least three months before any faculty vote is taken. The resolution passed with a vote of 25 in favor, 5 opposed, with 1 abstaining. The Senate Academic Affairs Committee will help organize the faculty and student debate on the issue in the coming months.

NOTE: Shortly following the Senate meeting, Vice President Rob Ingram drafted a [memo to Provost Barrett](#), requesting a faculty referendum on the University's grading system.

- **Transfer of Health Sciences and Athletic Training**

Academic Affairs proposed the following [RESOLUTION](#) regarding the transfer of Health Sciences and Athletic Training units from the College of Education to CHES. The resolution was unanimously approved by the Senate.

- **REMINDER:**

the SGA is sponsoring a reception for the Faculty Senate Wednesday, 28 October, from 4-5pm, in the Anderson Room of Ferguson Center

CQI projects

The University Quality Council met on October 6th to determine initial University CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) projects. Listed below is a brief description of the projects selected.

1. **Greening of the Campus.** A project to identify and initiate energy savings and other environmentally friendly activities that can reduce operational costs.
2. **Customer Service Strategies.** A look at how campus offices provide services to their customers, with a special emphasis on services to students.
3. **Downloading Databases.** A project to maximize our ability to make use of information in major data bases across the campus.
4. **Freshman Retention.** A project to extend the work of the freshman retention task force in order to continue the progress on this vital issue.
5. **Streamline the Hiring Process.** A project to examine the hiring process in order to find ways to simplify and improve the process.
6. **Review the Reclassification and Compensation System.** A project to diagnose and improve these administrative processes.

Quality Director John Dew can be contacted at 8-8378 or jdew@aalan.ua.edu.

[CQI project team memberships](#) can be found on the Faculty Senate web site under [Other Documents](#).

---Rob Ingram

Commencement Planning

The Commencement Planning and Commencement coordinators Meeting was held Friday, October 2, 1998 in Rose Administration, Room 203. 499 students participated in the August graduation. Need for wheelchair and other accommodations for persons with disabilities were discussed. It was announced that speakers for December and may have already been selected. The committee indicated that they did not feel that eliminating a speaker in future graduations would significantly reduce the time frame of the graduation ceremony. A discussion ensued concerning whether participants should be candidates or recipients of degrees. The recommendation was that all participants were to be candidates for degree. The President's Reception will be December 19 at the President's Mansion from 5 to 6 PM. The Honorary Degree will be presented with the hooding being provided by a Trustee. This is a departure of past graduation ceremonies in that the President usually does the hooding ceremony. Graduation will be December 10 at 2 PM with an expected participation of approximately 500 students. A specially designed robe for the Faculty Senate President and the National Alumni President were approved by the committee. Several ideas were considered for enhancing the ceremonial quality of the Graduation. One of the more popular suggestions was flags or banners for each college within the university. No recommendation was made.

--- Karla D. Carmichael

Human Relations Council meeting notes

Prior to the next scheduled meeting we were requested to elicit the following information from our respective constituencies:

What do you see as priorities regarding human relations issues?

Since I will be unable to attend the upcoming Oct. 20 meeting, I would appreciate Senators e-mailing me with their feedback (dnovak@nursing.ua.edu). Also, the council is being "reconfigured" so that by our next scheduled meeting (Nov. 23 or 24) the duties of the committee as well as membership will likely change. The focal issues are projected to be: diversity, harassment and abilities emphasizing linkages beyond the university including the community.

---Debbie Novak

RESOLUTION on Health Studies & Athletic Training transfer

WHEREAS The Academic Affairs Committee has reviewed the proposal put forth by Deans Bonner and Dolly to effect an administrative transfer of Health Studies and Athletic Training from the College of Education to the College of Human and Environmental Sciences;

WHEREAS The Academic Affairs Committee is satisfied that Deans Bonner and Dolly have resolved issues of concern to faculty in both divisions.

WHEREAS further discourse with the Deans has clarified other matters raised by the Committee; *THEREFORE*

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate concurs with the Academic Affairs Committee's assessment that no known problems remain, and by careful planning the parties involved have taken measures to minimize the possibility of unanticipated consequences.

---Academic Affairs

RESOLUTION on Revising Plus/Minus Grading System

The Senate recommends that the Provost call for a faculty referendum to consider the possibility of changing the current undergraduate grading system. The Senate also recommends that an interval of at least three months precede the vote. During that time the Senate will provide the academic community with relevant data pertaining to our grading system and the grading systems of peer institutions. In addition, an effort should be made to encourage faculty, students and administrators to study the data carefully, so that the level and quality of debate will be high and the vote itself will be divested of emotionalism and will reflect of sober judgement.

YES - 25

NO - 5

ABSTAIN - 1

Update on Plus/Minus

The Academic Affairs Committee of The Faculty Senate has been reviewing the plus/minus grading system since last Spring. We have reviewed a large amount of data from Institutional Research and SGA and have collected some data ourselves. We would like to have you review a synopsis of our findings and respond with observations, questions and suggestions.

When the University of Alabama decided to change its grading system from a standard system (A, B, C, D, F) to a plus/minus system (A+, A, A-; B+, B, B-; etc.), it made three changes simultaneously:

- 1) a thirteen step grading scale replaced a five step grading scale;
- 2) a published numeric standard was dropped (90=A, 80=B, 70=C, etc.);
- 3) academic standards were raised somewhat because a higher grade was needed to achieve an A(4.00), a B(3.00), or an C(2.00), etc. This became true because of the introduction of the A- which earned a 3.7 (less than a 4.00), the B- which earned a 2.7 (less than a 3.00), the C- which earned a 1.7 (less than a 2.00), etc.

This last change seems to be the primary reason some students, faculty, and administrators have raised questions about the plus/minus grading system.

COMPILATION OF DATA COLLECTED SO FAR

- 1) The mean GPA at Alabama under plus/minus has been: 2.540

The mean GPA without plus/minus would have been: 2.564

2) Under plus/minus the percentage of grades awarded in each category for the entire four year period has been:

Grade	Percentage
A+	4.8
A	18.2
A-	8.9
total -----	31.9
B+	8.0
B	15.6
B-	8.4
total -----	32.0
C+	6.1
C	11.1
C-	5.1
total-----	22.3
D+	2.0
D	3.8
D-	1.6
total-----	7.4
F	5.3
Other	.9
GRAND TOTAL	99.8%

(We will account for the missing .02 in our final calculations)

If a standard grading scheme had been used the essentially

following percentages would have resulted:

A	B	C	D	F	Other
32.0	32.0	22.3	7.4	5.3	1.0

3) The following percentages represent grades which caused quality points to be lowered under plus/minus:

Grade	Percentage
A-	8.9
B-	8.4
C-	5.1
D-	1.6
total-----	24.0

The following percentages represent grades which caused quality points to be raised under plus/minus:

B+	8.0
C+	6.1
D+	2.0
total-----	16.1

The following percentages represent grades which did not change quality points awarded under the plus/minus system:

A+	4.8
A	18.2
B	15.6
C	11.1
D	3.8
F	5.3
Other	1.0
total-----	59.8
GRAND TOTAL	99.9

(We will correct the final report to included the missing .01)

Therefore, essentially, under plus/minus:

60% of the quality points awarded remained the same;

24% of the quality points awarded were lower;

16% of the quality points were higher;

NOTE: At Alabama 75.1 percent of the sections used plus/minus;

At Alabama 24.9 percent of the sections did not use plus/minus.

Note as well that 85.0 of the faculty at Alabama are reported to have used the plus/minus system.

THE FOLLOWING RESULTS HAVE BEEN EXTRACTED FROM INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH RECORDS.

Under plus/minus 125 students in the Fall semester of 1996 would not have graduated because their GPAs were less than a 2.00.

Under plus/minus 191 students in the Fall semester of 1996 did not achieve a 3.00 who would have achieve a 3.00 under the standard system.

Under plus/minus 224 students in the Fall semester of 1996 did not achieve a 4.00 who whould have a achieved a 4.00 under the standard system.

4) Alabama's plus/minus system assigns quality points as follows:

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
4.0	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.3	1.0	.7	0

The following universities in the Southeast use the same system:

The University of Virginia
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Duke
Emory
Vanderbilt
Tulane

The standard grading system assigns quality points as follows:

A	B	C	D	F
4.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	0

The following universities in the Southeast use this system:

The University of Kentucky
The University of Georgia
The University of Mississippi
Louisiana State University
The University of Arkansas

An alternative plus/minus system is as follows:

A	B+	B	C+	C	D+	D	F
4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	0

The following universities in the Southeast use this system:

The University of Tennessee
The University of Florida
The University of South Carolina

(Tennessee gives no extra points for a D+)

Other universities which use some form of plus/minus include:

Florida State
North Carolina State
Texas Tech
The University of Huston

Other universities which do not use plus/minus include:

Auburn
Clemson
Georgia Tech
Mississippi State
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

5) Institutional Research provides this information about the distribution of grades form 1981 to 1986:

Summary of trends in Undergraduate Course Grade Distribution

Spring Semester, 1981 to 1996

	1981	1996
%As	23.2	29.9
%Bs	30.7	22.4
%Cs	25.3	18.5
%Ds	8.2	5.9
%Fs	6.2	6.3
%Other	6.4	12.0
GPA	2.55	2.73

It is easy to observe the increase in As and the decrease in Bs, Cs, and Ds.

6) Members of the Academic Affairs Sub Committee and representatives of the SGA have discussed advantages and disadvantages of the following options for Alabama:

- a) maintain the current system;
- b) return to the standard system;
- c) adopt the adjusted plus/minus with eight steps instead of thirteen (the system used by Tennessee, South Carolina, and

Florida);

d) adopt an ad hoc system of our own design, fashioned to address our perception of our particular needs.

One advantage of choosing one of the first three systems would be our sharing a grading system with at least some sister institutions.

One advantage of choosing the fourth option (an ad hoc system) would be our gaining the ability to address our own needs in a particularly articulate way.

Please read this material carefully and respond. We are convinced, and are joined by the student representatives of SGA in this conviction, that this issues needs careful consideration and the widest possible participation by all concerned.

---Marvin Johnson, CoChairman

---Academic Affairs SubCommittee
