

East Tennessee State University

## Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University

---

Faculty Senate Agendas and Minutes

Agendas and Minutes

---

1-22-1996

### 1996 January 22 - Faculty Senate Minutes

Faculty Senate, East Tennessee State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.etsu.edu/faculty-senate-agendas-minutes>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Faculty Senate, East Tennessee State University, "1996 January 22 - Faculty Senate Minutes" (1996).

*Faculty Senate Agendas and Minutes*. 411.

<https://dc.etsu.edu/faculty-senate-agendas-minutes/411>

This Minutes is brought to you for free and open access by the Agendas and Minutes at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Senate Agendas and Minutes by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact [digilib@etsu.edu](mailto:digilib@etsu.edu).

# FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

January 22, 1996

**NEXT MEETING: February 5, 1996, 2:45PM, Culp Forum**

**CALL TO ORDER** With a quorum present and with Donn Gresso unable to be at the meeting, John Quigley called the meeting to order at 2:50 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** The December 4, 1995 minutes were approved.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

**Performance Funding** Dr. Cynthia Burnley presented information about Performance Funding which is an assessment program in which institutions are awarded supplementary funding based on a point system. Dr. Burnley distributed a comprehensive written document to complement her presentation. Copies of the document may be obtained from the Faculty Senate office or from Dr. Burnley.

**Revised Policy and Procedure for the use of Memorial Center and Brooks Gym** Mr. Bowman rewrote the proposed policy, incorporating faculty suggestions and addressing concerns expressed by faculty. It was also necessary to include discussion about lack of liability on the part of the university for injuries incurred by users on the premises. The proposal was unanimously endorsed by the Senate.

**Professional Liability Insurance** Steven Berk, chair of the Committee on Concerns and Grievances reported that the Tennessee Board of Claims covers most faculty liability concerns that would be covered by professional liability insurance. Intentional prejudicial or malicious behavior on the part of faculty, the only behavior not covered by the Tennessee Board of Claims, might not be covered by an insurance company either. Therefore, it is likely that additional liability insurance would not add significantly to the coverage already in place for faculty. With his report, Dr. Berk supplied an explanatory handout which is available at the Faculty Senate office. Dr. Quigley asked Senators to discuss the report with their colleagues and bring reactions back to the Senate.

**+/- Grading System** Mark Hagy, chair of the Committee on Academic Matters will reported Dr. Jack Sanders, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, ran a statistical analysis on the effect of the plus/minus grading system and determined that the addition of the +/- grades had not affected the overall GPA at the university negatively. The committee concluded that "there are no statistical data to support the idea that students are being penalized in any manner ... that the current system is being effectively utilized, and its continued usage should be periodically reviewed." The Committee's report was accompanied by a handout which is attached to these minutes. Dr. Quigley asked Senators to share this report with their colleagues and get feedback from them for further Senate consideration.

## NEW BUSINESS

**Proposed Wellness Center** Dr. Myra Gordon and Dr. John Walker presented information about the proposed ETSU wellness center. In their report, they highlighted benefits of the center for students, faculty and staff, and the university in general. They explained that major financial support for the center will be generated through student fees. They also reported that the center would supply a substantial source for student employment. With their presentation, Drs. Gordon and Walker supplied a descriptive document which is available in the Senate office or the presenters' offices.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bill Fisher announced that TCRS is discussing an incentive plan. He also informed Senators that Hartford is taking over Provident's discontinued disability insurance. He recommends that faculty interested in disability insurance look into the TIAA-CREF plan.

Anne LeCroy reminded Senators that each college should submit names of potential members to be on standby in case the Tenure & Promotion Appeals Committee need be convened.

**ADJOURNMENT** The Faculty Senate meeting adjourned at 4:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted, E. Jane Melendez

## FACULTY SENATE ATTENDANCE 1995-1996

\*Excused    \*\*Absent

### App. Sci. & Tech.

Martin Barret  
Marian Clark  
Jimmy Hahs  
Keith Johnson

### Arts & Sciences

Steve Brown  
Peggy Cantrell  
Paul Kamolnick  
Anne LeCroy  
Jack Mooney  
George Poole  
Steven Ralston  
\*Naill Shanks  
Bonny Stanley  
Ed Williams

### Business

Murray Anthony  
Mike McKinney  
John Quigley  
Mark Steadman

### Dev. Studies

Jane Melendez

### Education

\*Donn Gresso  
Norma MacRae  
John Taylor  
Terrence Tollefson  
Janis Weedman  
Starlet Williams

### Library

\*Stephen Patrick

### Medicine

Steven Berk  
\*\*William Browder  
David Chi  
\*\*Gail Gallemore  
\*Leo Harvill  
\*\*Guha Krishnaswamy  
\*\*JoAnn Rosenfeld  
William Stone

### Nursing

Lynn Abusamra  
\*\*Sally Crawford  
\*\*Lee Glenn  
Sharon Rose

### Public & Allied Health

Julie Harrill Bowers  
Mark Hagy  
Albert Iglar  
Donna Garland Robbins

Report of the Academic Matters Committee  
on the  
Plus (+) Minus (-) Grading System at ETSU

January 8, 1996

**Background:**

The original study by the ad hoc committee of students and faculty indicated an extensive review of the literature and discussion with the faculty and student senates. The ad hoc committee report on Plus and Minus Grades stated:

ETSU currently has an A-F grading scale. Professors can assign students only one of four passing grades; according to local data, they typically use only three.

Under this scheme, the student who barely makes it into the B range receives the same grade as does the student who barely misses an A; likewise the student who just escapes making a D receives the same grade as does the student who is just shy of a B. The difference in performance between these hypothetical students is much greater than is the difference between the student who barely makes and the student who barely misses an A, yet the latter students end up with a point difference in grades.

Thus, the 4 point grading scale fails to make the appropriate distinction between students: relatively slight differences in student performance lead to substantial differences in grades while significant differences in performance are ignored.

The primary objective of the ad hoc committee was to initiate a plus/minus grading system that would allow more flexibility in grading and curb grade inflation. The committee felt that "11 buckets" or grade categories were sufficient based on the literature, rather than the traditional four letters. The ad hoc committee suggested that a review of the plus/minus grade system take effect after its implementation to determine whether the plus/minus system was accomplishing its objectives.

The current Academic Matters Committee was charged with reviewing the plus/minus grading system at ETSU and met several times to discuss the issue. Upon review, it was determined that: (1) A survey of ETSU peer universities would be conducted to see what type of grading system they were using; (2) Dr. Jack Sanders, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, would generate statistical data of the current system before and after implementation; (3) Richard Yount, Registrar, would be consulted to gain his insight on the subject.

**Problem:**

The Academic Matters Committee and Dr. Sanders concurred that if the objectives and intent of the ad hoc committee were not being met, does the plus minus grading system at ETSU need to be changed?

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the Sanders' study was to examine the system used at ETSU to assign undergraduate course grades. Initially, letter grade distributions were used to assess current and recent trends in grading practices by college and for the university. Additionally, the intent was to determine the numerical impact upon semester grade point averages by altering grade points assigned to "plus" and "minus" letter grades. This was suggested by Dr. Sanders since the literature indicated that the overall GPA decreases after implementation of a plus/minus grading system.

**Method:**

Data for the Sanders' study was obtained since its implementation in Fall 1992 through Fall 1994. This was compared to 1991, the year prior to implementation. It should be noted that computerized data prior to 1991 was unavailable for this study. The committee reviewed information regarding the effectiveness of the multi level system grading system.

**Discussion:**

First, all ETSU peer institutions were contacted by phone. Appalachian State University utilizes a plus/minus grading system which has been in effect since 1980-81. The other nine peer institutions operate on the four point (A-F) system. In accordance with the literature, it appears that Appalachian State and East Tennessee State Universities are leading the way toward the trend to implement plus/minus grading scales.

Second, the committee met with Dr. Sanders who reported on the statistics he had accumulated over the three-year period. He concluded that he could not provide explicit recommendations and that follow-up studies should be done to determine the long-term impact on grade distribution and the GPA's. However, listed below are some pertinent data from the Sander's report:

There were more A, and A- letter grades and fewer C+, C, in Fall of 1994 than in Fall of 1991:

1991-29% A	1994-33% A, A-
1991-22% C	1994-19% C, C+

2. Since 1992, the use of A- and B- has increased steadily. Use of C- remained the same for the three years.

3. The semester GPA for the University has remained constant over the past three years.
4. GPA comparisons among students enrolled in various colleges suggest that grade inflation was not a significant factor, except among Nursing majors.  
Fall 1992: 2.8                      Fall 1994: 3.1

NOTE\* See also attachment regarding letter grade distributions excerpt from the Sanders' study.

Finally, the committee met with Richard Yount. He shared his thoughts and observations of the current grading system and a report from the American Association of College/University Registrars (AACRAO). This report noted:

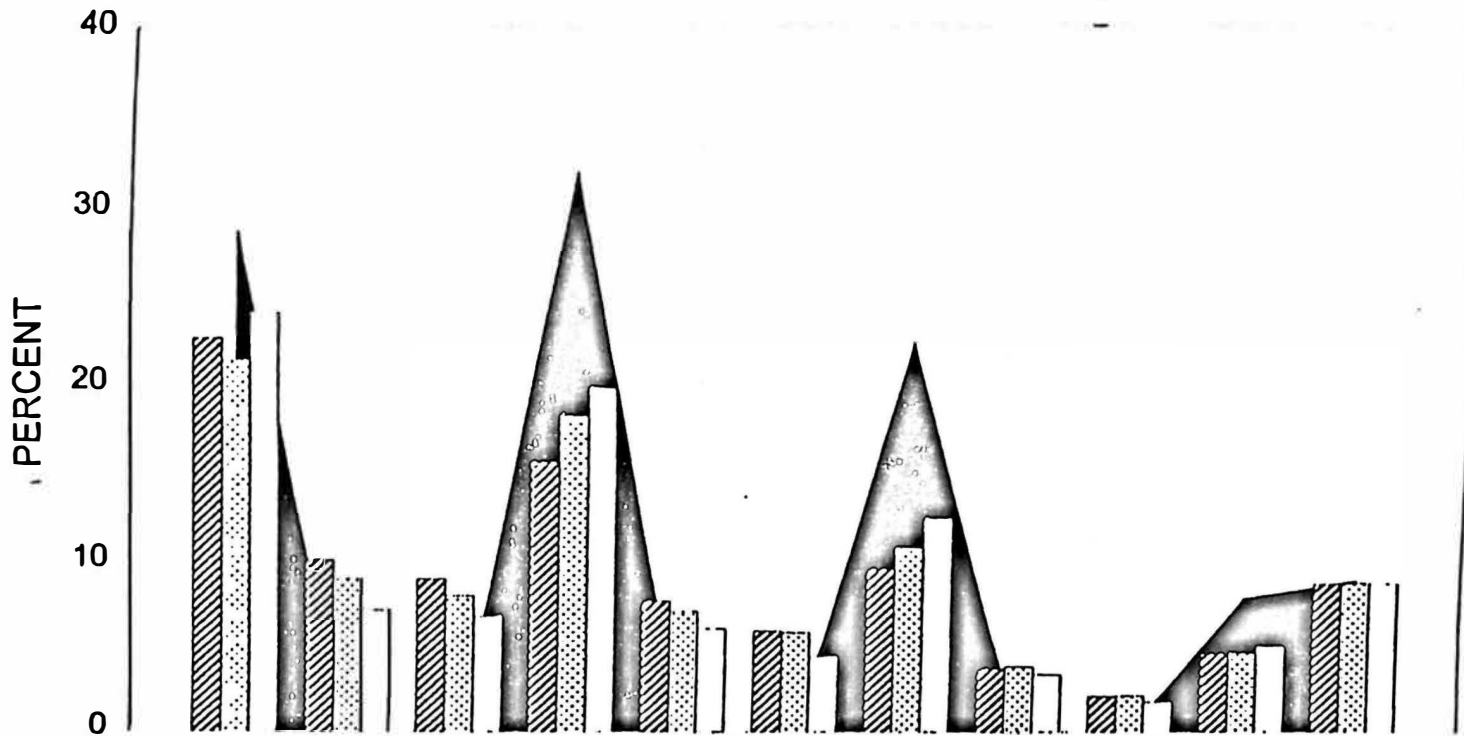
1. Increased use of the +/- system in grading across the country in institutions comparable to ETSU (size, student composition).
2. Institutions using such systems felt that faculty were enabled to award more reliable grades.
3. The more detailed system provides students with more information about their course performance.
4. Such systems seem to reduce grade inflation.

Mr. Yount cautioned the committee that any changes to the current system should be based upon factual information and not a popularity contest among faculty and students.

**Summary:**

In summary, the Academic Matters Committee concludes that the current plus minus grading system at ETSU is achieving the goals set forth by the original ad hoc committee. Furthermore, there are no statistical data to support the idea that students are being penalized in any manner. Therefore, the committee holds that the current system is being effectively utilized, and its continued usage should be periodically reviewed.

# UNDERGRADUATE FALL TERM GRADE DISTRIBUTION AT EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY



LETTER GRADE	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
FALL 1994	22.7	10.2	9.0	15.6	7.8	6.0	9.5	3.7	2.1	4.6	8.7
FALL 1993	21.4	9.1	8.1	18.1	7.2	5.9	10.8	3.9	2.2	4.7	8.7
FALL 1992	24.1	7.3	6.9	19.8	6.2	4.5	12.4	3.4	1.8	5.1	8.7
FALL 1991	28.8	0.0	0.0	32.1	0.0	0.0	22.4	0.0	0.0	7.9	8.9