

On grading

On Tuesday, Faculty Senate will consider two motions. One on changing the 4.5 system, and a second on the pass/fail system at the University. The first is important but the second is an essential step towards developing a rational grading policy in the University.

The pass/fail proposal would extend pass/fail option to sophomores; allow each student to take a maximum of 24 hours p/f (currently the maximum is 12); and give colleges the choice of making their group requirements open to pass/fail.

All three proposals are way over-due, and actually they are mild. What magic dividing line separates the sophomore and junior thus allowing the latter to take pass/fail but denies p/f to the former?

Since few students take more than 24 hours of electives, it doesn't do much good to extend the limit further. That is, unless colleges will allow any student to take his group requirements pass/fail. The colleges shouldn't have the choice to make requirements open to p/f; the student should have the choice to take group requirements pass/fail. The option shouldn't lie with the college, but with the student. In that case, the number of p/f hours should be unlimited.

Nevertheless, the p/f proposals are a progressive step, and they are the product of both student and faculty input. The Faculty Senate has the opportunity to make important improvements in the University grading system. The Daily Nebraskan hopes it will take advantage of that opportunity.

When the University changed from the 4.0 grading system to a 4.5 system in the second semester of the 1967-68 academic year, one reason was to bolster a dismal academic rating among Big Eight schools. Although this reason was not exactly emphasized, it was a major consideration in the switch. The plus system was designed to boost grade averages by adding a differentiation in grade between high and low average within each letter grade.

The bulk of University students, those with averages between 2.0 and 3.5, despite irregularities in grading have benefitted from this system. But have the minority of students above a 3.5 benefitted from it? How many A+'s have you received? How many students have grade averages above 4.0? The answer is very few. It is the better student who is "penalized" by the system. Not for his absolute g.p.a., but because his average relative to 4.5 makes the g.p.a. appear much lower than it actually is.

Tuesday, Faculty Senate will act on a motion to eliminate the A+ grade thus reinstating the 4.0 maximum but retaining D, C, and B plusses. Hopefully, the motion will carry. As long as the University persists in playing the numbers game, it at least shouldn't penalize those who play the game best.

—Jim Pedersen

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"THANK HEAVEN THERE'S NO WAY LEFT BUT UP."

Times are Changing?

by DON STENBERG

Next Tuesday the Faculty Senate will vote on two proposals submitted to it by the Faculty Senate Grading Committee — a change in the grading system and an expansion of the Pass-Fail privilege.

The results of these votes are important for several reasons. This will be the first time that a joint student-faculty committee has made a proposal to the Faculty Senate in an area directly related to academic matters. This particular committee was in fact established by the Faculty Senate a few years ago when a change in the grading system made independent of any student input aroused concern among many of the students and faculty.

The results of the vote should at least to some degree help to establish whether the creation of this committee and others like it are merely a form of tokenism or whether the faculty feels that students can be a positive force in improving the academic environment.

BOTH PROPOSALS are revisions of ASUN Education Committee proposals. These revisions were made by the faculty members of the Grading Committee in light of their own experiences and in consideration of suggestions by their colleagues.

The faculty members on the committee came from several different colleges and represented many varied interests — yet the final drafts of both proposals gained the unanimous support

of the committee as well as the endorsement of the Arts and Sciences Advisory Board, the Engineering Exec Board, the Agricultural Advisory Board, the Business Administration Advisory Board, the Teachers College Advisory Board, the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee and the ASUN Education Committee.

THE ONLY major criticism of either proposal that has not been ironed out is that "in recent years there has been overmuch tinkering with grading procedures." Each and every faculty member has the right to vote against these proposals for this reason, or any other.

However, it seems that most college faculty members would be quite out of character if they voted these proposals down on the basis that they constitute "overmuch tinkering."

For are not these same faculty members those who advocate extension of knowledge through research and experimentation, and who seek to use their knowledge to improve our society? And are these proposals not a calculated effort to improve existing conditions?

LAYING ALL other considerations aside, the ASUN Education Committee feels that these proposals should be passed because they offer constructive improvement in the area of grading and evaluation that should be of benefit to both the faculty and students. Hopefully the Senate will share this view.