




University Senate CHARGE

Date:	February 24, 2012
To:	Robert Buchanan Chair, Academic Procedures & Standards
From:	Eric Kasischke Chair, University Senate 
Subject:	Proposal to Change the Minimum Average in all Courses Applied to Undergraduate Major Requirements
Senate Document #:	11-12-31
Deadline:	March 30, 2012

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) requests that the Academic Procedures & Standards (APAS) Committee review the attached proposal entitled, Proposal to Change the Minimum Average in all Courses Applied to Undergraduate Major Requirements.

The University Senate and President Loh approved the “Proposal to Review the University of Maryland Policies Concerning Academic Transcripts and Calculation of Grade Point Average (Senate Doc. No. 10-11-11)” in November 2011. The Office of the Provost was charged with implementing the recommendations in the legislation. Provost Wylie’s implementation plan instructs units that, “All references in University publications defining minimum required grades must be changed to D-, C-, B-, or A- rather than D, C, B, or A.” Units that would like to make changes to their degree requirements must submit a proposal through the Senate’s PCC Committee, and those changes would not be implemented until the Fall 2013 semester. The attached proposal requests that the University consider an overall requirement of a C (2.0) cumulative grade point average in all courses used to satisfy major degree requirements. The SEC requests that the APAS Committee review the attached proposal and determine whether this requirement is appropriate.

Specifically, we ask that you:

1. Consult with the proposer to discuss her specific concerns about the current implementation plan.
2. Review similar implementation policies for weighted plus/minus grading at our peer institutions.

3. Consult with representatives of the Office of the Provost on the impact of this proposed change on our academic mission.
4. Consult with the University's Office of Legal Affairs.
5. If appropriate, recommend whether an overall change to the minimum grade point average for degree requirements is necessary.

Because the new policy and subsequent implementation will go into effect in the Fall 2012 semester, we ask that you submit your report and recommendations to the Senate Office no later than March 30, 2012. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Reka Montfort in the Senate Office, extension 5-5804.



University Senate PROPOSAL FORM

Name:	Katherine Pedro Beardsley
Date:	February 15, 2012
Title of Proposal:	Proposal to Change the Minimum Average in all Courses Applied to Undergraduate Major Requirements
Phone Number:	301-405-1692
Email Address:	kbeard@umd.edu
Campus Address:	2141 Tydings Hall
Unit/Department/College:	College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
Constituency (faculty, staff, undergraduate, graduate):	Staff
Description of issue/concern/policy in question:	<p>In Fall 2012 the campus will implement the Policy on Plus/Minus Grading. The thrust of the policy incorporates fractional computations of numerical values assigned to letter grades in the calculation of students' grade point averages. The implementation of this policy will not allow departments or programs to change their degree requirements until FY13.</p> <p>Currently, the degree requirements of most majors at the University of Maryland use a grade of C (2.0) for courses which fulfill major requirements, as well as supporting area (where applicable) and skills options (where applicable) courses.</p> <p>A letter sent by the Provost's office to Deans regarding implementation of the new policy on calculating grade point averages states:</p> <p>"All references in University publications defining minimum required grades must be changed to D-, C-, B-, or A- rather than D, C, B, or A."</p> <p>The result will be that for the Fall 2012 cohort, a C- will suffice in courses used to meet various types of major requirements. These students could possibly graduate with a 2.0 cumulative grade point average even though earning only a 1.70 (C-) in every course required for the major; higher grades in elective and general education courses could counter-balance low grades within the field where the student is supposed to have developed specialized understanding</p>

and competencies. Although this possible outcome may not occur often, the fact that it is possible indicates a weakening of rigor within majors.

During FY13 there will be a number of program proposals which will be generated to change the minimum degree requirements to a 2.0 average in courses required for the major and/or specific grades for courses required for the major will be proposed. Thus, the Fall 2013 cohort will be under a different set of degree requirements than the cohort of Fall 2012.

This can result in inequities for students, monumental difficulties for advisors, and a more-complicated-than necessary transition to the eventual goal of most academic programs: To have a clear set of standards that define educational expectations for our students.

By way of comparison, here is a listing of the degree requirements of our peer institutions:

At UCLA “students must have an overall GPA of 2.0 in all of their UC coursework, and a 2.0 GPA in the major coursework.” At UC Berkeley and the University of Michigan, grade requirements vary by department with most majors requiring a 2.0 cumulative GPA in their major coursework.

The University of North Carolina essentially requires a C (2.0) grade in general education, major course work and major field of study:

“To graduate with a baccalaureate degree, students must successfully complete at least 120 semester hours of course work and attain a final cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0. Students also must satisfy all General Education requirements and complete at least 18 semester hours in the major field with a grade of C or better (C- does not qualify). In all cases, at least half of the courses and credit hours in the major must be completed at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.”

UNC-Chapel Hill students “must complete a major field of study as prescribed by the department or curriculum. Although a specific grade point average in the major is not required, a minimum of 18 hours of C or better (C- does not qualify) in the major is required. Selected majors require 21 hours of C or better grades in the major. Students transferring credits in their major field must earn a grade of C (not C-) or better in at least three-fourths of those courses and credit hours in the major that are taken at UNC–Chapel Hill. All

	<p>students, including students transferring from another institution, must take at least half of their major course requirements at UNC–Chapel Hill.”</p> <p>At the <u>University of Illinois</u>, grades of 2.0 for general education and curricular courses are required.</p> <p>“College and Combined GPA. Students must earn a cumulative grade-point average of 2.00 (C) or better in all coursework taken on this campus applying to their LAS degree. Students who take off-campus courses must also earn a minimum "combined" GPA of 2.00 (C) or better when transfer grades are averaged with LAS grades. All Secondary Education majors must achieve a minimum 2.50 in these cumulative GPAs.</p> <p>Curricular GPA. Students must meet minimum academic performance standards in their major. Students must earn a cumulative GPA of 2.00 (C) or better in all courses taken on this campus included in their major GPA. Students who take off-campus courses used in their major must also earn a minimum "combined" GPA of 2.00 (C) or better when transfer grades in their major are averaged with LAS grades included in their major GPA. Some departments require a higher cumulative GPA for graduation. All Secondary Education majors must earn a 2.50 GPA in all courses in the major taken on this campus.”</p> <p>To maintain the integrity of our programs, which are comparable to those at peer institutions, we must bring the implementation policy in line with current degree requirements.</p>
<p>Description of action/changes you would like to see implemented and why:</p>	<p>I am recommending that there be a minimum campus standard for completing degree requirements at the University of Maryland. By implementing such a minimum standard it will mean that many academic units across the campus will not have to submit degree requirement program proposal changes to their majors in FY13. This will significantly reduce the number of program proposals that departmental, college/school and campus PCC Committees would have to review.</p> <p>For those academic units who have a degree requirement of a C grade in every course which is a major degree requirement that will automatically change to a C- on July 1, 2012, the following policy is being proposed:</p>

	<p>All students must earn a C (2.0) cumulative grade point average in all courses used to satisfy major degree requirements. The minimum grade for any required course is a C-.</p> <p>Note: Major degree requirements may exceed this minimum requirement as is the case in some academic units across the campus.</p>
<p>Suggestions for how your proposal could be put into practice:</p>	<p>The Campus Senate would pass the grading policy suggested above and direct implementation for Fall 2012.</p>
<p>Additional Information:</p>	

Please send your completed form and any supporting documents to senate-admin@umd.edu or University of Maryland Senate Office, 1100 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, MD 20742-7541. Thank you!