

1-10-1980

Academic Standards and Calendar Committee Report #1978-79-6: Program Average

University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate

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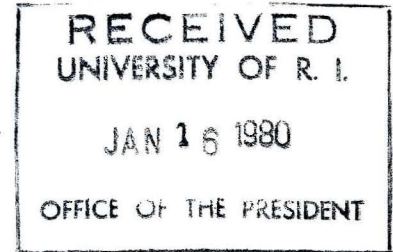
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UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
Kingston, Rhode Island

FACULTY SENATE
BILL

Adopted by the Faculty Senate



TO: President Frank Newman
FROM: Chairperson of the Faculty Senate

- 1. The attached BILL, titled Academic Standards and Calendar Committee Report #1978-79-6: Program Average

is forwarded for your consideration.

- 2. The original and two copies for your use are included.
- 3. This BILL was adopted by vote of the Faculty Senate on January 10, 1980 (date).
- 4. After considering this bill, will you please indicate your approval or disapproval. Return the original or forward it to the Board of Regents, completing the appropriate endorsement below.
- 5. In accordance with Section 8, paragraph 2 of the Senate's By-Laws, this bill will become effective on January 31, 1980 (date), three weeks after Senate approval, unless: (1) specific dates for implementation are written into the bill; (2) you return it disapproved; (3) you forward it to the Board of Regents for their approval; or (4) the University Faculty petitions for a referendum. If the bill is forwarded to the Board of Regents, it will not become effective until approved by the Board.

January 11, 1980
(date)

Alvin K. Swonger
Alvin K. Swonger
Chairperson of the Faculty Senate

ENDORSEMENT

TO: Chairperson of the Faculty Senate
FROM: President of the University

- 1. Returned.
- 2. a. Approved ✓.
- b. Approved subject to final approval by Board of Regents _____.
- c. Disapproved _____.

1/23/80
(date)

Frank Newman
President

University of Rhode Island
Faculty Senate
Academic Standards and Calendar Committee
Report #78-79-6
August, 1979

Appendix A

CUE Recommendation 34.13

PROGRAM AVERAGE CALCULATION

BACKGROUND:

In May of 1979 the Academic Standards and Calendar Committee met with Prof. A. Swonger, former chairman of the Commission on Undergraduate Education's Subcommittee on Grading Practices, to reconsider CUE recommendation 34.13. (A copy of this recommendation is attached to this report as Appendix A. Also attached to this report as Appendix B are excerpts from a report submitted to the commissioner on Undergraduate Education by its Subcommittee on Grading Practices which indicate the rationale for CUE 34.13. Appendix C of this report contains data from an illustrative study prepared by the CUE Subcommittee on Grading Practices.) The Academic Standards and Calendar Committee had reviewed CUE 34.13 in 1978 and rejected it. However, in later conversations it became clear that the committee had misunderstood several points. When these were later clarified by Prof. Swonger the committee decided to pass the recommendation on to the Senate for action.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Academic Standards and Calendar Committee recommends:

- 1) That the University at the earliest possible date institute the practice of calculating program averages for all of its students as described in Commission on Undergraduate Education recommendation 34.13.
- 2) That this method of evaluation shall apply to incoming freshmen only in the first year of its implementation, shall apply to sophomores and incoming freshmen in the second year of its implementations, and so forth.
- 3) That at the end of a two year trial period, the Academic Standards and Calendar Committee and the Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate shall make recommendations to the Senate as to whether, when a student graduates, his Program Average shall appear on his transcript along with a brief explanation.

D. Campenella (Std.)
J. Demitroff (ex-officio)
J. Fraleigh
J. Kowalski (chairman)
G. McNab
D. May
G. Osborne
F. Test

That the University at the earliest possible date institute the practice of calculating program averages (PA's) for all of its students. This method of evaluation should apply to incoming freshmen only in the first year of implementation.

For each course offered at the University, the average grade of students registered for the course shall be calculated from the roster of grades as submitted by the faculty member at the end of the grading period. Incompletes shall not be included in the calculation. Each student's program average shall be calculated for the current semester and cumulatively in the same manner that the QPA is currently calculated except that the average grade of the entire class (only the specific section that the student was actually in for multi-section courses) shall be used in place of the student's own grade.

In effect, the PA will indicate what the QPA would have been for a hypothetical average student taking all the same courses (and the same section) as the student in question. Thus the PA is an individualized anchor point for interpretation of the QPA. Grades transferred from other colleges and universities would not figure into the PA just as they do not currently figure in the QPA. The course average for each course, the student's PA for the semester and the student's cumulative PA will appear on each semester grade report.

At the end of a two-year trial period, the Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate shall decide whether, when a student graduates, his PA will appear on his transcript along with a brief explanation.

Appendix B
Rationale for CUE 34.13
(Excerpted from a report prepared by the
CUE Subcommittee on Grading Practices)

Problem: The percentage of all grades that are A's and B's has been rising in recent years while the frequency with which C's, D's and F's are assigned has been dropping. Grading inflation is disadvantageous for the following reasons: (1) the integrity of the grading system is thrown into question and high grades are no longer respected by those outside the University community; (2) students who completed their college educations in different years (as little as two or three years apart) cannot be equitably compared with respect to GPA; (3) achievements such as cum laude or the Dean's List have lost their exclusiveness and much of their ability to command respect.

Problem: The different curricula across campus differ widely in the degree of difficulty and in the distribution of grades. This makes it extremely difficult to compare students competing for the same slot in graduate or medical school, etc., or for employment if the students in question have substantially different academic backgrounds.

Recommendation: [please see CUE 34.13, Appendix A]

Impact of Recommendation: Adoption of this recommendation would have the following effects: (1) the performance of each student could be more truly assessed by comparing his QPA with that of an average student taking the same courses; (2) students from different graduating classes and different curricula could be compared more adequately; (3) the incentive to take "easy" courses or "easy" instructors would be greatly diminished; (4) students who self-select difficult programs and electives would be identified by their low PA; (5) although grade inflation would not necessarily be stemmed by this procedure, there would be an honest and up-front measure of it which would provide a base of comparison; (6) it would be of interest to investigate whether the QPA when adjusted for differences in PA would be a better predictor of postgraduate success than the QPA itself.

Appendix C

Table of Program Averages for 46 randomly selected 1974 URI graduates

Student#	College	QPA	PA
1	Home Econ.	2.72	2.95
2	Nursing	3.83	2.55
3	Pharmacy	2.09	2.71
4	Bus. Ad.	2.97	2.61
5	Med. Tech.	3.96	2.50
6	Sociol. (A&S)	3.63	2.97
7	Res. Devel.	2.68	2.71
8	Home Econ.	3.25	3.03
9	Phys. Ed. (A&S)	3.27	3.17
10	Chem. (A&S)	2.48	2.52
11	Bus. Ad.	3.67	2.65
12	Classics (A&S)	3.20	3.11
13	Botany (A&S)	3.44	2.76
14	English (A&S)	2.49	2.71
15	Bus. Ad.	2.72	2.65
16	Civ. & Envir. Eng.	2.31	2.65
17	Bus. Ad.	2.72	2.65
18	Phys. Ed. (A&S)	2.82	2.66
19	Nursing	2.38	2.70
20	Sec. Ed. (A&S)	3.73	2.94
21	Sec. Ed. (A&S)	3.76	3.16
22	Home Econ.	2.64	2.84
23	Res. Devel.	2.71	2.64
24	Mech. Engr.	2.34	2.67
25	Bus. Ad.	2.46	2.57
26	Pharmacy	2.55	2.60
27	Res. Devel.	2.85	2.43
28	Phys. Ed. (A&S)	2.02	2.72
29	Bus. Ad.	2.02	2.63
30	Speech (A&S)	3.64	3.09
31	Res. Devel.	3.14	2.66
32	Bus. Ad.	3.52	2.67
33	Home Econ.	2.82	2.68
34	Bus. Ad.	2.07	2.68
35	Bus. Ad.	2.97	2.65
36	English (A&S)	3.19	3.21
37	Elem. Ed. (A&S)	2.54	2.98
38	Pol. Sci. (A&S)	3.63	2.70
39	Elem. Ed. (A&S)	2.84	3.04
40	English (A&S)	2.41	2.87
41	Civ. & Envir. Eng.	2.24	2.78
42	Zoology (A&S)	3.19	2.75
43	Med. Tech.	2.97	2.45
44	Bus. Ad.	2.68	2.64
45	Bus. Ad.	2.70	2.67
46	Speech (A&S)	2.86	3.00