This Resolution Shall Henceforth Be Known As the:

“The Student Government Association’s Stance on the Plus/Minus Grading System”

PURPOSE

To declare The University of Texas at San Antonio’s Student Government Association’s stance on the plus/minus grading system for undergraduate and graduate classes.

Opening Statement

The plus/minus grading system has been a subject of intense disdain and disagreement amongst the students and faculty of UTSA since its implementation in 2011. It has adversely affected students success and has few potential benefits to counteract the numerous and substantial consequences. We take this position with the utmost severity and urgency with the concern and wellbeing of the students in mind.

WHEREAS: Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution of The University of Texas at San Antonio's Student Government Association reads: "The duties and responsibilities of the SGA General Assembly shall be: To review, discuss, consider, and take any necessary action through legislation on all issues which concern the campus or students"; and

WHEREAS: On November 4th, 2010, the Student Government Association passed a resolution expressing dissatisfaction with the Faculty Senate approval of the plus/minus system, specifically articulating the following concerns:

1. The implementations and usage of plus/minus will be inconsistent between instructors; and
2. “A+” does not award 4.33 grade points, and thus does not cancel out an “A-”, which itself awards 3.67 grade points; and

WHEREAS: A "B-" is insufficient to for a postgraduate student to graduate from the Graduate School and a "C-" is insufficient for an undergraduate to graduate from their respective College; and

WHEREAS: On March 20th, 2014, the Academic Policy and Requirements (APR) Committee of the Faculty Senate responded with the following comments, to wit:

1. The purpose of the plus/minus system was not to affect students' Grade Point Averages, but to differentiate between the various levels of effort and achievement;
2. The "A+" grade was included in order to serve as a mark of achievement on a transcript, while not translating to a GPA;
3. The "B-" and "C-" grades were constructed to raise the quality of the "product" (i.e., UTSA graduates);
4. Professional schools were not considered because "there are no such schools at UTSA";

WHEREAS: On September 17, 2012, in an article of The Paisano, Dr. Bennie Wilson III, Chair of the APR Committee at the time of the plus/minus system's approval, claimed that, ultimately the professor is in charge of giving grades: "you cannot force them to use or not use the system." When the registrar records the grades, the numerical scores are not recorded, and the computer does not discriminate by department. Professors simply input the letter grades and pluses/minuses. Technically any professor can give a student a plus or minus grade if they so choose; however, professors are required to include how grades will be distributed on course syllabi.

WHEREAS: The scales for plus/minus grades vary widely throughout instructors in the University. Some professors do not use "A+", some professors do not use plus grades at all, and others vary the scale for each grade within the system; and

WHEREAS: This inconsistency creates very real and visible disparities between students of different instructors, departments, and colleges; and
WHEREAS: Other universities nationwide have begun to reevaluate their implementations and have petitioned their respective Faculty Senates of the plus/minus system (e.g. Georgia State University, Missouri State University, Oklahoma City University); and

WHEREAS: UTSA has numerous students who are planning to attend professional schools wherein a student's GPA is a crucial factor in holistic admission decisions. UTSA has two majors and a certificate specifically tailored for these pathways:

1. For students wanting to go to law school, UTSA offers:
   a. B.A. Politics and Law via the Department of Political Science and Geography; and
   b. Certificate in Legal Reasoning via the Institute for Law and Public Affairs; and

2. For students wanting to go to medical school, UTSA offers:
   a. B.A. Medical Humanities (Pre-Medicine Concentration) via the Department of Philosophy and Classics; and

3. Dr. Heather J. Shipley, Interim Dean of the University College, also noted that the B.S. Biology is the traditional route for students who plan to attend medical school; and

WHEREAS: The Provost has indicated that he supports dropping the plus/minus system at the graduate level;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the Student Government Association disapproves of the current implementation of the plus/minus system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Student Government Association will provide a resolution of options within six weeks of the passage of this resolution.
Marcus Thomas
President of Student Government Association
The University of Texas at San Antonio