Approval of the minutes for the third meeting (October 3rd, 2018), put forward by Erin, seconded by Darryl. All in favor of approval.

Timely Reporting of Grades

I. Guest speaker Terry, member of the faculty Senate, spoke on the conversations he had with student and faculty members on grade reporting. He noted that grade reporting had been on students’ radar since 2015. Previously, the focus had been on BB learn grading. The core issue was that students must get timely feedback about performance and progress in a course. He noted that the teaching and advising committee should examine timely reporting of grades. The timeliness of grade reporting was not an endemic problem, but did exist in our system. The survey designed by ASUI came up for discussion and it was suggested that there is a need to gather data on the frequency of feedback the students would consider adequate. It was also noted that the survey reflect questions that the students need to ask. Terry also presented the point of view from some members of the faculty Senate who had noted that the students do not show up to office hours for feedback on progress.

II. Terry opined that the issue was about faculty accountability and transparency.

III. Erin stated that the teaching and advising committee members can help with the issue but need expertise with data on the topic. It was suggested that the TeAC push out a special task force for working on the issue comprising of eight members. Brian suggested that though eight members would be acceptable we need to work on optimizing the size of the committee.

IV. Stephan noted that the task force for working on timely reporting of grades needs to have representation from the TeAC and that the committee should not wander far from the TeAC. He also mentioned that there was a need for identifying the relevant data to be searched.

V. Darryl observed that the committee needs to have expertise on identifying the relevant data and coming out with a methodology, including considering the possibility of using historical data from the registrar’s office.

VI. The use of learning management systems for such purposes was brought up by Brian. He noted that there was a need for culture of early warning and midterm grades, and that a deep dive into the learning management system would be helpful for this purpose.

VII. A discussion on the topic of timely grade feedback continued with Terry requesting that TeAC forward its recommendation by the spring semester. He suggested that a smaller group of three members start working on recognizing the problem. ASUI representative Carlos noted that students would be fine with the recommendations being provided by the spring semester. Stephan noted that the reporting of midterm grades was not too prevalent and that 645 courses...
did not report midterm grades. He emphasized the need for meaningful grades and that there needs to be an effort to identify both placeholder and meaningful grades. Terry observed that it was just not the grades but the quality of feedback that matters. Darryl suggested sampling students for gathering such data from a random selection of all sections. The questions could be as simple as “How do you feel about instructor feedback on your grades?”. Terry noted that the Provost was also keen on such a survey.

VIII. It was suggested that a three-member working group consisting of Brian Smentkowski, Stephan Flores, and Carlos Vasquez take the lead on outlining a plan for and the composition of a subcommittee to examine this issue. Brian, Stephan and Carlos will identify outside experts (i.e., representation from Registrar, additional student representation, etc.) to include on the working group and establish a plan to solicit input from instructors (e.g., a Qualtrics survey). Additionally, this working group will incorporate input from any ASUI survey results regarding students’ perceptions of grade reporting and feedback. Erin will follow-up with the working group for regular progress reports to be shared with the full TeAC committee. All TeAC members voted in favor of this core subcommittee of Brian, Stephan and Carlos taking the lead on examining the timely reporting of grades issue (TROGI).

IX. Carlos read out the ASUI survey, and provided clarifications for the other members regarding questions included in their survey. This led to further discussion among the team members on what constituted timely reporting. Terry observed that the question at hand was whether students were getting feedback at predetermined points during the progress of the course, and the number of times we give feedback is an issue. Furthermore he also noted that the feedback must be useful. Brian observed that from the students perspective a letter grade might not be as helpful as critical feedback explaining why they got that letter grade. Terry observed that it may not be possible to provide annotated feedback to a large group of students and a rubric discussed in class might be sufficient. Terry further noted that the faculty Senate does not want to impose how the feedback should look like and that the problem should be addressed in a tractable manner. He also noted that the regulatory approach might not get as much traction, and that we might consider the possibility of adding a question related to timely reporting of grades in the course evaluation forms which could be assessed by the unit administrators for enforcement. Raffaella noted that such questions may not provide quantitative results. She also observed that it is difficult to hand in feedback for something that the students have not yet completed. This followed a short discussion between Kamal and Carlos on if BB learn was a suitable platform for reporting of grades. Carlos indicated that students were okay with grades on BB learn.

Plus/Minus (±) Grading System

I. Erin started the discussion by noting that Stephan had done bulk of the work on this issue related to the revision of memo on this topic. She raised the question if we could send a recommendation to the faculty Senate on the same.

II. Stephan noted that this move from a four letter range to a 11 letter range is more accurate. It has greater academic integrity, closely represents the performance of the students, and is also fairer. He noted that the grading system should provide for a sharper delineation. The implementation of such a system, if approved, would begin in fall 2023.
III. Stephan also pointed out certain issues that could arise on account of the ± grading system. These include:
   a. Credit transfers: Other colleges and institutions follow the ± system
   b. Student motivation: It would be easier for the students to jump one grade in the new system and therefore will result in greater effort on the part of students.
   c. Faculty concern: There is likely to be a larger number of dissatisfied students and grade appeals will be frequent.
   d. Flexibility: The system provides for greater faculty flexibility in dealing with borderline cases.
   e. That the ± grading system disciplines the students unnecessarily

Stephan provided points, for and against, each of the issues, he raised in the above.

IV. Erin noted that this recommendation must go to the faculty Senate. Raffaella observed that NUS had a numeric grade system and that the ± grade should allow for greater fairness. Stephan observed that an advance notice about this transition would help incoming students and that the current students would have already graduated by the time the system is implemented.

V. Carlos noted that he is personally in favor of the ± grading system but that he must fight against it for the students. Erin wanted to know why are the students against this change. Examples and counterexamples that would benefit/hurt the students were provided by both Erin and Carlos.

VI. Erin wanted to know if we could make a decision today on the topic. Stephan responded by saying that there were several details that needed to be sorted out. For example Boise State has a A+ through D- weighted GPA and it is possible to obtain better than a perfect GPA. Some institutions don’t have a A+ or D-. There also needs to be a clear deadline for D and D-, and that D- was too marginal for credit. Terry noted that either plus minus grading scheme would be fine and that faculty is agnostic to the idea. It is important that we wrap up this issue.

VII. Stephan presented the motion: “Should we work towards a plus minus grading system with the details to be worked out later.” Christine seconded the motion. The motion passed with seven yays (Erin, Stephan, Carlos, Helen, Kamal, Raffaella, Christine) and two abstentions (Darryl & Dean).

Meeting adjourned 12:28pm

Next meeting schedule for Wednesday, Oct. 24th, 11am-12:30pm, ED 530.