

Students Flunk New Grading Policy

by Eric Kimbel

The new grading policy at Methodist has produced anxiety in some students and faculty. *Small Talk* interviewed various faculty and students to find out about their views.

Professor Trevor Morris of the Political Science Department said that the new scale will benefit both students and staff. The new policy allows the professor to make a more precise "qualitative distinction" in the student's performance. He also said that the system gives students more control over their grades. The new policy will provide more motivation throughout the semester, according to Morris.

When asked about any disadvantages to the new policy, Morris said that the "adjustment" by the upperclassmen is the only one he can foresee.

In the Department of Communications, Professor Robert Bloodworth, said that the advantages of the new policy outweigh its problems. According to Bloodworth, the students can now know "exactly where they stand" in the class. This more accurate ranking of performance increases student motivation to get the "B+" instead of just the "B." The one

problem that Bloodworth pointed out is that the policy makes extra work. The professors now have to be "more precise with their averages." Bloodworth also said, "I think the most important thing is just learning something, rather than getting the grade."

Professor Elaine Porter, Chairperson of the Foreign Language Department, said "that [the 12 point scale] will be more fair in showing the difference between a high 'B' and a low 'B,' or any other letter." She explained that some people "just barely get an 'B' and others almost get an 'A.'" When questioned about possible problems, she said "that until we've had a semester of it, who can say?"

Professor Linda Gravitt, Director of the Evening College, agreed that the new policy is more fair to the student. She also said that the new policy is much better, because under the old system one student could get an "80" and another student could get an "89," and they would both get a "B."

Gravitt said that each instructor has the option of going to the new scale or staying with the old system. Gravitt, who reviews incoming transcripts for the Evening College, said that in her experience

most other schools operate under the twelve point scale. Gravitt pointed out that many evening students, especially seniors, disagree with the new grading scale.

Dr. Suzan Cheek, Professor of Political Science, said that she thinks the "students will get a more accurate reading of their performance." She pointed out the "big disparity between the quality of work at a 'B+' level and a 'B-' level." She also said that graduate schools will be very interested in the new grading policy, because transcripts will now be more precise. It will also "encourage extra effort" from the student, according to Cheek.

On the negative side, she said that "fine tuning" of the grade to the new scale will require more work from the instructor.

Dr. Kline, Professor of Economics and Business, said that the policy "allows instructors to deal with the borderline cases." He also said that "it allows a finer discrimination of evaluation of performance." Kline pointed out that this type of evaluation is a "nasty, difficult problem" in the business world. "The difficult points are it 'muddies the waters' for students coming in under different catalogs," Kline said, and that those people

are "caught in transition."

Kline said that nationwide "grade inflation" is the cause for such policy changes. Kline said that there is "evidence across the country" of grade inflation. He also said a former colleague of his at another institution gave 90% "A's" and "B's," to his classes.

Professor Parker Wilson of the History Department, said that he supports the decision. He said that there is a need to be able to distinguish between a "B-" and a "B+," because it does make a difference in the quality points received.

When asked if there were any disadvantages to the policy, Wilson said that when viewing the transcript one may not actually look at the "+s" and "-s," and that it "may not really matter." Wilson said that one would look mainly at the G.P.A. when viewing a transcript.

Wilson also pointed out, that the mid-term grades do not actually represent one half of the student's grade. He said that "there was a time when mid-term grades were not turned in at all unless the student made a 'D' or an 'F' on their first test."

After interviewing these instructors,

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MC Begins Year With New Faces—Many Changes

by Diana Pressley

Methodist College began its 32nd academic year with a 9% increase in enrollment and a number of changes in its academic programs. Methodist also began many new programs aimed at student retention.

A total of 1373 students enrolled this year. There are 982 students in the day program and 391 students in the Evening College.

A significant number of these students are freshmen who also live on campus. These students represent 32 states and five foreign countries.

Alan Coheley, Director of Admissions explained "the popularity of Methodist is on the upswing." The admissions counselors spend at least 10 weeks traveling throughout the east coast and recruiting students. The college recruits heavily in Cumberland and other North Carolina counties, but has also had great success in bringing students from states

such as Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Florida and Virginia.

Methodist has also brought foreign students to the campus. Coheley feels that these students do well at a smaller school like Methodist because they tend to interact with a greater part of the student body. He feels that a well-rounded education also involves more than just what you learn in the classroom.

Coheley hopes to further increase enrollment by bringing more prospective students to the campus and placing them with current students in an Ambassadors program. This program would allow prospective students to spend time on campus with a currently enrolled student and attend classes, have lunch in the cafeteria, and perhaps stay in a dorm. This allows prospective students to hear what current students have to say about Methodist.

The Admissions Office would also prefer that more students become involved with the Tour-Guide Program.

This program uses currently enrolled students to show prospective students and their parents around campus. This program also benefits the student guides in that they learn skills such as sales and public relations which may benefit them in the future.

Methodist is also promoting Academics. The new admissions brochure proclaims Methodist College excellence and "Education: the Greatest Achievement." George Small, Assistant Director of Admissions stated that "students are serious about their future and realize the importance of an education." With the economy in its current state, job competition is tough and the better prepared a student, the better his or her chances of finding a job.

The academic program has also seen the addition of two new majors--International Relations and Criminal Justice/Legal Studies. Other programs such as the Education and Social Work programs are preparing for accreditation by

their respective accrediting boards.

This semester Methodist has adopted a new and controversial 12-point grading scale. This will allow students to receive letter grades with pluses and minuses as well as full letter grades.

Methodist is also implementing new programs aimed at increasing student retention. Dr. Bitterbaum, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, explained some of the new programs which he is very excited about.

These new programs are either early intervention programs or drop-out-prevention programs. The early intervention programs will provide assistance to new and returning students in the areas of registration advice, orientation, career counseling and study skills.

Departmental tutoring and peer tutoring provide assistance for students who are struggling with a subject. The

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