

Baylor University Faculty Senate Minutes
13 November 2012 • 3:30 p.m. • Cashion 110

Joe Ferraro attended as a substitute for Senator Lori Baker.

Absent: Michael Parrish, Mark Taylor, Joe Coker, Deanna Toten-Beard, Rufus Spain (now retired effective 9 Nov), Ron Morgan

- I. Call to Order by Chair Todd Still.
- II. Invocation by Senator James Patton.
- III. Approval of Minutes from the 9 October 2012 Meeting: Unanimous.
- IV. A Conversation with Mr. Richard Willis, Chair, Board of Regents:

Senate Chair Dr. Todd Still introduced Mr. Willis, the son of a Baylor Professor of Agricultural Economics, and a businessman of considerable accomplishment.

1. Mr. Willis opened with a statement of appreciation for Baylor faculty performance. He suggested that a major contribution by the faculty is students' graduating with a "heart of service."
2. He invited comments about the football stadium. He began by stating his disappointment at finding that the football stadium is getting donations at a much higher rate than has been the case for the President's Scholarship Fund. He has hopes that funds for a new business school and for scholarships will increase in imitation of the donation pattern for the football stadium.
3. One Senator asked "Where does the Board see the tuition going in the next few years?" Mr. Willis responded that the Regents wish to lessen the tuition by one half of one percent for the next 5 years.
4. Another Senator raised the issue of the apparently-growing number of concussions among college football players. Mr. Willis noted that this is an important issue, and one that has not yet been satisfactorily dealt with. "Athletics is our window to the world," he noted; and it is difficult to know what to do about the athletics "arms race."
5. Mr. Willis suggested that we should encourage business-people and others to go on missions trips with our students (paying for themselves + one student), and thus develop their enthusiasm for the students, then for scholarship.

6. A Senator raised the issue of relationships with the Baylor Alumni Association. Mr. Willis responded that he is taking part in meetings with the Alumni Association, hoping to effect a rapprochement. Some progress has been made, he remarked; meetings continue, but he cannot currently comment on those meetings.
7. Another Senator asked, “Does this mean that hostilities have ended? Can both sides work together to reach some agreement?” Mr. Willis said that some on both “sides” are so angry that they cannot yet talk together. His view is that 78% of the people on both sides are working to bring about productive dialogue between the two “sides.”
8. A Senator asked if the Alumni Association building would be “put back” into the football stadium plans. Mr. Willis replied that a building where one could gather before the game is clearly necessary; “we do have the responsibility to understand this,” he added.
9. Another Senator noted the value of an alumni association to fund-raising. “The enthusiasm and the independent support of Baylor,” he added, is important. Mr. Willis noted that the Baylor Alumni Association gave \$8,800.00 to Baylor last year—so not in itself a significant source of fundraising.

V. Old Business

- A. Master Teacher Policy: Chair Still noted that Dr. Bennighof has written to him, and we can expect to see the policy as the Senate reviewed it enacted early in 2013.
- B. Survey Regarding CVS/Caremark “Step Therapy” Prescription Program and its Implementation: Chair Still reported on the plan to survey faculty members and staff concerning any grievances University faculty and staff might feel concerning this matter. Two Senators are liaison members of the group looking into this issue. Dr. Still has noted the concern to the Board of Regents.
- C. Plus/Minus Grades: the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee’s (UUCC’s) unanimous recommendation is to add minuses and pluses throughout, with no A+ and no F minus or plus. The motion was tabled in the April 2012 meeting; Senator Beck moved to remove the motion from the table; seconded by Senator Baldrige. Motion passed. Several Senators spoke to the issue; faculty reactions, here and in the departments polled, were mixed. One Senator noted that instituting minus grades would automatically lead to a lowered GPA for graduating students. The motion to approve the Committee’s recommendation passed, 20-7 (with one abstention).

Senator Beck moved that the Senate include with its recommendation a statement encouraging the Provost, if she adopted the policy, to include her statement that faculty of any rank may or may not choose to use the plus/minus system. Adopted unanimously. (The full [and lengthy] recommendation of the UUCC appears below.)

- D. BU-PP 705: concerning faculty removal from the classroom. Dr. James Bennighof vetted and returned the proposal sent to him by Dr. Still; Dr. Still, Faculty Senate Chair, moved that the proposed addition to BU-PP 705 be accepted by the Faculty Senate.

Discussion followed. Two Senators questioned the “legally advisable” and “logistically possible” wording in the suggested paragraph. Senator Allman moved an amendment: suggesting deleting the phrase “when logistically possible and legally advisable,” he moved that we add instead the following: “If circumstances do not permit a prior consultation, then the Provost shall consult the aforesaid committee as soon as logistically possible.” Seconded by Garrett Cook. Discussion followed. Amendment adopted 20-8, no abstentions.

Dr. Still asked for a vote on the motion as amended; 25 for, 2 opposed, one abstention. (BU-PP 705 as amended and recently submitted to Vice-President Bennighof appears below.)

VI. New Business

A. Recommendation Concerning Appeal Procedures at Baylor (Baird):

1. Dr. Bob Baird proposed “ways of implementing the proposal he gave to the Faculty Senate in our previous meeting” (appearing in the minutes for October 2012). He added that he has conversed with administration officials on the matter, and he believes that the administration will be willing to adopt the proposal. Senator Yancey Gaynor moved acceptance of the proposal by the Faculty Senate; motion seconded by Ron Beal; motion passed unanimously. (See two documents below: Dr. Baird’s background materials for the Faculty Senate and the proposal to be sent to the administration.)

B. Course Evaluations During Summer Term:

1. Dr. Beck asked during our last meeting concerning evaluations for faculty who wanted them during summer terms; she asked that the Senate appeal that these evaluations be made available to faculty at

their request, as an automatic response. A general air of approval met her suggestion.

- C. New Committee Proposals: Dr. Still proposed the formation of a Selection Committee for Outstanding Dissertations and Theses (the proposal appears appended below). In response to “Why do this?” He replied that it agrees with what peer aspirant institutions do, and it gives graduates another positive line on the CV.
 - 1. Dr. Lori Spies asked that Nursing School capstone projects (MA level theses) be considered as well. Another Senator suggested a similar process for selecting the Cornelia Marschall Smith Teaching Award.

VII. Reports

- A. Chair Report (Still): Pledge forms for United Way contributions are (were then) available at the front of the room.
 - Dr. Rufus Spain sent a retirement letter to the Senate; a motion was made to send a letter of thanks and appreciation to Dr. Spain. The motion passed by acclamation.
- B. Student Life (Wood): No report.
- C. Enrollment Management/Staff Council (Patton): No report.
- D. Athletic Council (Neubert): No report.
- E. Admissions (Burlison): Meeting took place, no issues arose.
- F. Janelle Walter raised an issue which will be discussed at our next meeting.
- G. The issue of scheduling athletic practice or athletic events during class or exam meeting times was raised; Dr. Still reported that he had sent a letter to Ian McCaw and other members of the athletic staff concerning this issue.

VIII. Adjournment (5:14 pm).

Minutes submitted by Tom Hanks, Secretary

FINAL VERSION OF BU PP 705 as amended by the Faculty Senate and forwarded by Chair Todd Still to Vice President Bennighof

Prior to suspending a faculty member or assigning him or her to other duties, pending an ultimate determination of his or her status through a dismissal hearing, the Provost shall consult with the Academic Freedom and Responsibility. *If circumstances do not permit prior consultation, then the Provost shall consult with said committee as soon as logistically possible.* Suspension or reassignment of the faculty member prior to the final decision regarding his or her tenure should only occur if immediate harm to the faculty member or others is threatened by the faculty member's continuance. Unless legal considerations forbid, any such suspension should be with pay.

Perhaps inserted in BU-PP 705 as a new item following section I.B.3:

Prior to suspending a faculty member or assigning him or her to other duties, pending an ultimate determination of his or her status through a dismissal hearing, the Provost shall consult with the Academic Freedom and Responsibility Committee when logistically possible and legally advisable. Suspension or reassignment of the faculty member prior to the final decision regarding his or her tenure should only occur if immediate harm to the faculty member or others is threatened by the faculty member's continuance. Unless legal considerations forbid, any such suspension should be with pay.

AAUP Redbook:

Pending a final decision by the hearing committee, the faculty member will be suspended, or assigned to other duties in lieu of suspension, only if immediate harm to the faculty member or others is threatened by continuance. Before suspending a faculty member, pending an ultimate determination of the faculty member's status through the institution's hearing procedures, the administration will consult with the Faculty Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure [or whatever other title it may have] concerning the propriety, the length, and the other conditions of the suspension. A suspension that is intended to be final is a dismissal, and will be treated as such. Salary will continue during the period of the suspension.

BACKGROUND for the discussion brought to the Faculty Senate by Dr. Robert Baird, University Ombudsman, on “University Grievances” (BU PP 028, 712, and 822)

In the Faculty Handbook a division appears entitled University Grievances. Under that title are three items: 028 Civil Rights Policy, 712 Faculty Grievances, and 822 Staff Grievances. The basic statement establishing the University Grievance Policy, a statement which also establishes the University grievance Committee, does not appear in this location at all. It appears in a separate location, pages 165-167 of a section titled Employment Documents.

A minor problem arises when 822 Staff Grievances is selected because the title of the document that then appears is University Grievances. This is misleading. **The title of this document should be changed to Staff Grievances.**

When 712 is selected two brief paragraphs appear which state what a faculty member should do who “feels that he/she has been denied fair and just treatment regarding salary, rank, course load, course assignment, continuance in employment in the case of nontenured teachers, or any other matters pertaining to his/her employment.” This is similar to section VI of the Baylor University Faculty Evaluation and Compensation Policy which appears only in the print version of the Faculty Handbook and does not appear in the online version of BU-PP. Neither BU-PP 712 or section VI refer grievances to the University Grievance Committee. **This results in the unnecessary creation of ad hoc committees to hear such grievances and the process described for creating such committees could give the appearance of administrative bias.**

These problems could be solved by three moves: **First, revising the University Grievance Policy by eliminating the seventh and last matter now excluded from the scope of the University Grievance Committee. This is the recommendation approved by the Senate in the October Senate meeting.**

University Grievance Policy

I.Scope

This policy provides a process that may be used to resolve grievances among members of the University community, including students, staff, faculty and administrators. This process is applicable only to grievances regarding actions taken directly and specifically against the grievant by the respondent, or conduct directed specifically toward the grievant by the

respondent. This process shall not be used to challenge University policies and procedures of general applicability. Moreover, grievances regarding the following matters are specifically excluded from the scope of this policy:

- Grievances by individuals alleging violations of their civil rights, which are governed by the Civil Rights Resolution Policy (BU-PP 028).
- Grievances entirely among students.

- Grievances by staff members involving claims that the staff member has been denied rights under the employment policies of the University, which are governed by the Staff Grievance Policy (BU-PP 822).
- Grievances by students against faculty members involving academic issues, which are governed by the Academic Appeals Policy.
- Grievances involving tenure decisions, which are governed by the Tenure Policy (BU-PP 704).
- Dismissal proceedings initiated by the University against a faculty member, which are governed by the Dismissal Policy (BU-PP 705).
- ~~Grievances involving a faculty member's annual evaluation or compensation, which are governed by the Evaluation/Compensation Appeal Process.~~

No change is recommended for the remainder of the University Grievance Policy which runs three pages and establishes the University Grievance Committee and specifies its procedures.

Second, rename BU-PP 712 Baylor University Grievance Policy, and replace what now appears at 712 with the Baylor University Grievance Policy as amended above.

Third, eliminate the use of the only portion (Section VI) of the print version of the Faculty Evaluation and Compensation Policy now operative. In effect, the Senate recommendation in October did this too.

BU-PP 712 now reads: If any member of the faculty feels that he/she has been denied fair and just treatment regarding salary, rank, course load, course assignment, continuance in employment in the case of nontenured teachers, or any other matters pertaining to his/her employment, he/she shall submit a written statement of his/her grievance, together with the factual basis thereof with any supporting statements or other appropriate evidence to the chairperson of his department. The chairperson of the department shall then discuss the statement with the faculty member filing the complaint.

If the matter is not completely settled by the above discussion between the chairperson and the faculty member then the chairperson, after consulting the tenured members of the department faculty, shall submit the complaint and all supporting materials, together with his/her answer thereto and recommendation thereon, to the dean of the college or school involved. Subsequently, the dean of the college or school, along with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and President of the University, shall review the charge, answer and recommendations, and make final decision regarding the complaint.

VI. Evaluation/Compensation Appeal Process

When substantial reason arises for a full-time faculty member to question either his or her annual evaluation or compensation set for the successive academic year, the following steps should be followed in the appeal process:

1. A faculty member who wishes to question either his or her evaluation or compensation should first confer with the administrator responsible for the initial salary recommendation to review and clarify the conclusions reached in the most recent annual evaluation and salary consideration.

2. If the faculty member is still dissatisfied with his or her evaluation or compensation following this conferral the dean of the unit, if he or she is not responsible for the initial salary recommendation, will appoint the chair of an ad-hoc evaluation/compensation review committee. If the dean is responsible for the initial salary recommendation, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the dean, will appoint the chair of the committee. The chair of the committee will appoint the additional members of the committee.
3. The evaluation/compensation review committee should meet to consider written material and oral remarks of all the parties involved.
4. A written report of the review committee's findings should be given to the faculty member, the chair, the appropriate dean, and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. With as much objectivity as possible, the committee's report should address the questions of fairness, accuracy, and appropriateness in the evaluation process and offer observations and recommendations to the faculty member and to those responsible for the evaluation.
5. On the basis on [of] the report of the review committee, the appropriate dean, if he or she is not responsible for the initial salary recommendation, will make the final determination of the appropriate salary recommendation. If the dean is responsible for the initial salary recommendation, the final determination of the salary recommendation will be made by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the dean.
6. The final performance evaluation and salary recommendation will be communicated in writing to the faculty member and to the administrator or administrators responsible for the initial salary recommendation. Further appeal will be considered only at the written request of the faculty member to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

**Summary of Recommendations (brought to the Faculty Senate by Dr. Baird,
adopted unanimously)**

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I.Scope

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Selection Committee for Outstanding Dissertations and Theses

Reporting Line: The Selection Committee for Outstanding Dissertations and Theses reports to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Composition: The Selection Committee for Outstanding Dissertations and Theses consists of 15 members:

- Dean of the Graduate School (*ex officio*)
- Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies (*ex officio*)
- 12 graduate faculty members: Potential member will be nominated by the chairs or deans of the doctoral degree granting departments or schools and selected by the Committee on Committees.
 - All members must have a reputation for excellent dissertation or thesis directing and be actively contributing to research and scholarship in their respective fields.
 - The membership should include four representatives from the STEM fields, four from the humanities, and four from the social sciences.
 - The committee will consist of a rotating membership, with members serving a three-year term, and four members rotating off the committee each year. (In the first year, members will be asked to serve a one, two, or three-year term to initiate this process.)
- URSA Liaison (*ex officio*): This person should be a graduate faculty member appointed by the director of URSA whose primary responsibility will be to help coordinate the awards ceremony in conjunction with USRA's undergraduate research presentations.

Committee Charge/Responsibilities: The Selection Committee for Outstanding Dissertations and Theses is responsible for reviewing nominations for outstanding dissertations and theses and recommending the awardees according to the approved criteria and guidelines.

University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
Exploring a Minus Grade Option for Undergraduate Courses
February 9, 2012

Prompted by an inquiry from the provost's office, the UUCC is exploring issues involved in adding a minus grade option for undergraduate courses.

Background

Baylor's current undergraduate grading policies include the following description of "course grades and points":

- A Excellent; earns four grade points per semester hour.
- B+ Very good; earns three and one-half grade points per semester hour.
- B Good; earns three grade points per semester hour.
- C+ Above average; earns two and one-half grade points per semester hour.
- C Average; earns two grade points per semester hour.
- D Poor; earns one grade point per semester hour.
- F Unsatisfactory; earns no grade points per semester hour.

The current policies have been in effect for a number of years, although they were reviewed in 2001-2002, when the possibility of adding a minus grade option was explored. At that time, a proposal to adopt a plus and minus grading policy was opposed by Student Senate, endorsed in October 2001 by the Academic Freedom Committee under Dr. Joe Cox as chair, unanimously adopted in a November 13, 2001 meeting of the Faculty Senate under Dr. David Longfellow as chair, and considered but ultimately rejected by the Council of Deans in a series of late spring and early fall meetings in 2002.

Faculty support for a plus/minus system was present a decade ago. On behalf of Faculty Senate, Dr. Longfellow identified the "primary reasons for wanting to adopt the new system" as "the desire to give professors greater latitude in assigning grades and to reduce grade inflation." Part of the discussion also included a desire "to bring Baylor into line with other American colleges and universities."

Student government representatives consulted by the Faculty Senate were reticent to endorse a plus/minus system, evidently believing that its effect would be to lower grade point averages.

As best as the record can be reconstructed, in November 2001, the COD expressed no concerns about adopting a plus/minus system. However, when a concrete proposal was brought for consideration at their April 2002 meeting, a decision was postponed in order to clarify the impact upon student athletes. By the beginning of the fall semester the COD had rejected the proposal.

No further official consideration of the issue appears to have occurred between 2002 and 2012.

Current Grading Policies of Big XII Institutions

As detailed below, Baylor's grading policies constitute an anomaly among its Big XII peers. Among those institutions, two patterns prevail.

One group of institutions has a simple integer grade point scale, with A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0. Those institutions include Kansas State, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M, and Oklahoma.

A second group of institutions use a plus/minus grade point scale, with approximately 1/3 of a grade point added or subtracted, as the case may be, from the traditional integer grades. Those institutions include Iowa State, Texas Christian, Kansas, Missouri, and Texas.

Like Baylor, Texas Tech's grading policy is an outlier. At Texas Tech, instructors may assign plus/minus grades, but they have no effect on the grade points assigned.

Baylor's undergraduate grading policies differ from its Big XII peers in three ways.

1. No other university in the Big XII has a plus option in the absence of a correlative minus option.
2. Among the universities in the Big XII that have plus/minus systems, none of them allocates a half-point for a plus grade.
3. Every other Big XII university uses the same grading system for undergraduates and graduates, while Baylor does not. (Further detail on this point is available in the next section.)

Institution	A+ D	A D-	A- F	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+
Baylor University	n/a 1.00	4.00 n/a	n/a 0.00	3.50	3.00	n/a	2.50	2.00	n/a	n/a
Iowa State University	1.33 1.00	n/a 1.00	4.00 0.67	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.67
Kansas State University	n/a 1.00	n/a 1.00	4.00 0.00	n/a	n/a	3.00	n/a	n/a	2.00	n/a
Oklahoma State University	n/a 1.00	n/a 1.00	4.00 0.00	n/a	n/a	3.00	n/a	n/a	2.00	n/a
Texas A&M University	n/a 1.00	n/a 1.00	4.00 0.00	n/a	n/a	3.00	n/a	n/a	2.00	n/a
Texas Christian University	1.33 1.00	n/a 1.00	4.00 0.67	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.67
Texas Tech University	1.00 1.00	4.00 1.00	4.00 0.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
University of Kansas	1.30 1.00	n/a 1.00	4.00 0.70	3.70	3.30	3.00	2.70	2.30	2.00	1.70
University of Missouri-Columbia	1.70 1.30	1.30 1.00	4.00 0.70	4.00	3.70	3.30	3.00	2.70	2.30	2.00
University of Oklahoma	n/a 1.00	n/a 1.00	4.00 0.00	n/a	n/a	3.00	n/a	n/a	2.00	n/a
University of Texas	n/a 1.00	n/a 0.67	4.00 0.00	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.67

Considerations and Issues

The UCC has identified a number of issues that should be considered as part of a shared, deliberative process about what Baylor's grading policies should be:

1. Use of a plus grade option in the absence of a minus grade option likely results in inflated grade point averages among our undergraduates.
2. Allocating a half-point bonus for plus grades instead of the conventional one-third point bonus for plus grades likely results in inflated grade point averages among our undergraduates.
3. Our undergraduate grading policies are anomalous when compared to Big XII institutions.
4. Our undergraduate grading policies are anomalous when compared to our policies for graduate student grades. As the Graduate School Catalog outlines: "Passing grades for graduate students are A (4.00), A- (3.75), B+ (3.50), B (3.00), B- (2.75), C+ (2.50), C (2.00) and C- (1.75). The grade of D carries one grade point per hour; however, it will not apply toward the total number of hours required for program completion."
5. Adopting a standard plus/minus grading system for undergraduates would likely decrease grade inflation, and it would bring Baylor's anomalous grading system more closely into line with grading policies in place at its Big XII peer institutions. Put differently, a standard plus/minus system would strengthen the university's ability to represent student achievement more precisely and more consistently.
6. Whatever grading options are available under the "system," we must preserve faculty freedom to assign plus or minus grades, or to forego plus and minus grades in favor of straight letter grades, as governed by their pedagogical judgments, practices, and standards.
7. Under a standard plus/minus grading system, advisors and instructors of student athletes eligibility would need to communicate clearly and effectively about the impact of "C-" grades worth 1.67 or 1.7 grade points. On the assumption that eligibility is set at a grade point average of 2.0, earning a minimal "C" under the current system is adequate; under a standard plus/minus system, earning a "C-" would not be adequate.
8. Under a standard plus/minus grading system, advisors and instructors of students with scholarships determined by grade point averages would need to communicate clearly and effectively about the impact of minus grades on eligibility (or continued eligibility).
9. Regarding #7 and #8, we should expect students to seek more than merely minimal academic success, and we should support them in every reasonable way as they strive to learn successfully.
10. Students are likely to be averse to a change in the current grading policy which is widely believed to result in higher-than-otherwise grade point averages.

11. Shifting to a standard plus/minus system would likely result in a reduction in the number of graduates honored at commencement as having completed degrees with a 4.0 GPA.

12. Based on other Big XII university experiences with changes in grading policies, any change in the undergraduate grading policies at Baylor will likely involve raise some transitional challenges and questions.

Appendix One

Comments and Explanations about Grading Policies at Big XII Universities (Provided by Various University Registrars to Jonathan Helm, Baylor University Registrar)

University of Oklahoma--We had a long debate about moving to +/- grades a few years ago, and the faculty senate voted to adopt this grading system, but the OU Board refused to approve the process so we have not changed.

Iowa State University--Changed back in 1981. No unintended consequences that I can recall! I do think that gpas dropped slightly because we do not utilize an A+, so mathematically there is a very slight negative impact on gpas.

We do not force use of + - grading. If an instructor only wants to use letter grades, that's fine.

Only other issue has to do with academic standards/prereqs and C- grades. Since a C has a 2.00 value, and a C- is less than a 2.00, earning a C- can cause the student to be on warning (if all other grades are C grades). Some courses require a C or better (not C-) as prerequisite. After 30 years, this isn't really an issue - just a reality!

University of Texas-Austin--The biggest unintended outcome was the sense from some across campus, both students and faculty, was if there are now two grading scales (one with +/- and one without) and if +/- grading scale was optional or mandatory. My response has been there is just one scale and the instructor chooses which grade to assign based on their assessment of the students' performance. This has been the stickiest issue with which we've contended.

Texas Christian University--We implemented +/- about five years ago. This was a faculty initiative, the result of long study and discussion among faculty. Students were unhappy... went to board and chancellor to express their displeasure... felt they would be disadvantaged. Chancellor insisted students who were 'currently enrolled' be grandfathered on old grade system (non +/-)... which we did. I expected incredible problems from this but it was not as much of a headache as I anticipated.

University of Kansas--Since we leave it up to the individual schools/college to decide, I can't think of any. The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences adopted plus/minus grading a few years ago, and the instructors like it.

University of Missouri-Columbia--The Grad School added it this past fall and there was no fall out. The UG has had it for years, but we periodically get complaints from students that faculty don't use them although they are supposed to.

Texas Tech University--We allow the use of +/- grading but it does not affect GPA. Faculty wanted to use +/- grading but did not want (along with Provost) to affect GPA.... Our rounded GPA points are great for us.