

August 19, 2008

TO: Members of the Faculty

FROM: Jon Chenette, Chair, Committee on Academic Standing

RE: Academic Year 2007-08 Annual Report

The Committee met regularly to review petitions, waivers, and other requests concerning academic regulations. During January and June the Committee also reviewed the academic status of all students on the academic docket.

This year CAS issued 6 dismissals and 10 suspensions. During the January docket, 1 student was dismissed and 7 students were suspended; in June, 5 students were dismissed and 3 suspended. In 2006-07 a total of 4 students were dismissed and 19 suspended. After fall 2007, 19 students were placed on probation. 10 were placed on probation in spring 2008. In 2006-07 a total of 48 students were placed on probation.

The Subcommittee on Academic Honesty considered 15 cases involving a total of 23 students. This year 19 students were found guilty. Of the 19 cases resulting in a guilty decision, 5 cases involved plagiarism, 3 involved cheating on an exam, 9 involved inappropriate collaboration, and 2 involved other forms of academic dishonesty. Thirteen students received the standard penalty imposed for those found guilty of a first instance of dishonesty: zero on the assignment, calculation of the zero into the final grade, lowering of the resulting grade one full letter, and one or two semesters of academic dishonesty probation. Two students were found guilty for the second time and received more severe penalties, including one who was suspended for a semester. By faculty legislation, none of these students are eligible for graduation with honors. Four students received mitigated penalties and remain eligible for graduation with honors.

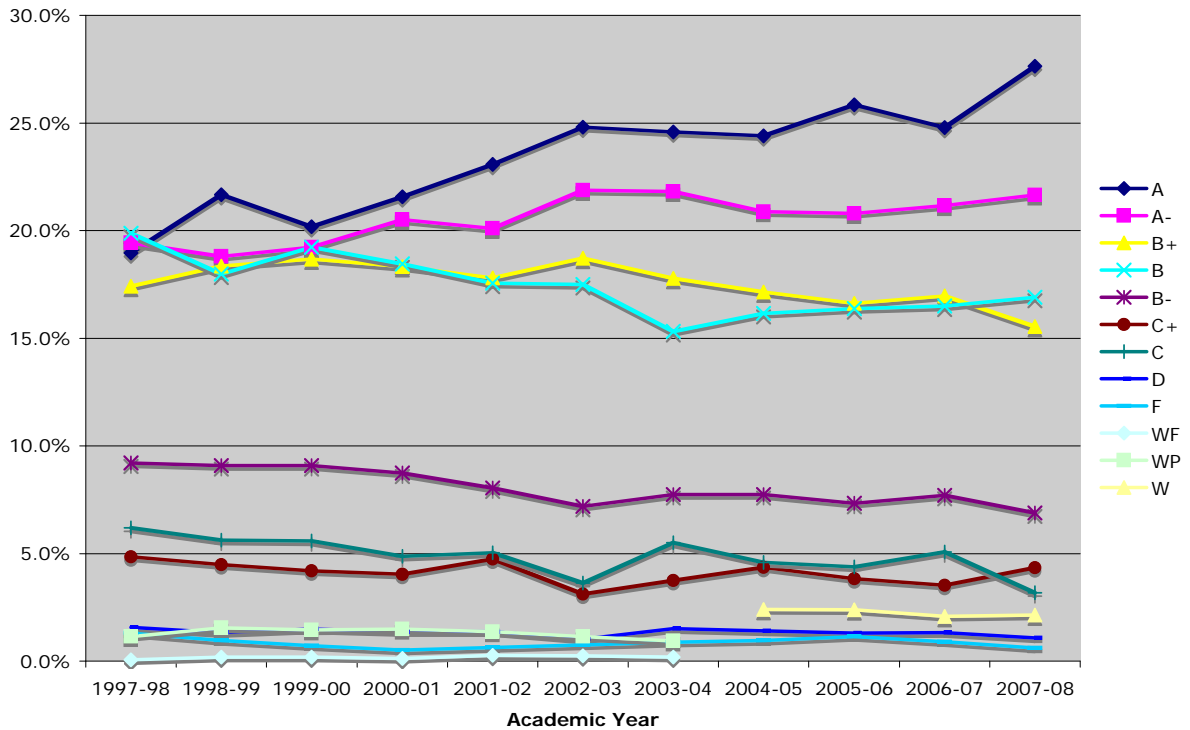
The Committee fulfilled its responsibility, under NCAA rules, of defining “Good Academic Standing.” Prior to this year, any student studying on campus was *de facto* in good academic standing. After consultation with athletic coaches and other faculty, the Committee approved the following language for the *Student Handbook* clarifying the definition of “Good Academic Standing:”

GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING: “Good academic standing is defined as making normal academic progress with GPA and credits and having no academic sanctions more severe than probation. Strict probation or suspension removes a student from good academic standing.”

The committee considered and approved language regarding the appropriate advisers for independent majors. The new language is in bold italics:

Two faculty advisers are required for all independent majors to assist in planning the major and to supervise the thesis. ***The advisers must be from two different departments with courses included in the major.*** One adviser must be a full-time faculty member. The other may be part-time. Advisers should be persons who expect to be at Grinnell in the student’s senior year to supervise the thesis planning, research, and writing. If one of the advisers leaves the College, on leave or permanently, the student is responsible for

Grade Distribution All Grades



As indicated by the shaded cell in the table, nearly half (49.3%) of all grades for full courses during 2007-08 were A or A-. The chart provides a visual representation of the increase in A and A- grades over the past decade and the decline in frequency of most other grades. The 3.4% jump in frequency of A grades between 2006-07 and 2007-08 is particularly striking, suggesting the need for wider faculty conversation about grading norms at Grinnell. I urge the faculty next year -- whether through CAS, Executive Council, or general faculty meeting discussions -- to take up the issue of the causes and impacts of this increase in frequency of A and A- grades. Possible topics for consideration include whether and how to counter this trend, whether to adjust GPA criteria for honors or off-campus study, whether to add normative information to our academic transcripts for clarification of Grinnell's norms, and whether departmental reviews or even individual faculty reviews should include a look at their own grade-frequency distributions compared with those of the College as a whole.