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Proposal to Include an A+ Option to the Grading Scale

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**Proposed by:
Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee**

**Endorsed by:
Wichita State University
Student Government Association**

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this proposal is to encourage the Wichita State University Faculty Senate to consider a change to the Wichita State Grade Point System to add an “A+” letter grade option with three different proposals to consider. With the three different proposals, they are put in numerical order with the first being the most recommended by the Student Government Association.

CURRENT STATUS:

The following table summarizes the current Wichita State Grade Point Scale.

Table I. Wichita State University Grade Point Scale

Letter Grade	Grade Points
A	4
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1
D-	0.7
F	0

Table II. Proposed Grade Point Scale

Letter Grade	Grade Points
A+	4.33 or 4.00
A	4
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1
D-	0.7
F	0

INEQUITY AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF CURRENT STATUS:

1. A grade of **B-** may be offset by earning a **B+** in another course, which allows an average of a 3.0 on our current GPA scale. This can be seen with other grades such as C and D.
2. The current system does not allow students the opportunity to earn an A+ but does include an A-. The result is an unequal treatment if compared to the B, C, and D grade categories. Thus, once a student receives an A- in at least one course, the student can no longer raise his/her/their GPA to a 4.0.

Other Negative Consequences:

1. The current scale of the A- without the option to offset with an A+ places a burden on students and makes it harder to make up their GPA upon the receipt of a less than satisfactory grade. Studies from Wake Forest and North Carolina State show how GPAs may decrease slightly because of the current system. Without an A+, GPAs starting at around 3.5 are slightly lower than those with an A+ (Matthews).
2. Because there are other schools that offer an A+, it puts our students at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to applying graduate schools. The most prominent instance of which is the Law School Admission Council which uses a +/- scale with A+ being taken into account as a 4.33 (Academic Record).

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Allows a better reflection of student's achievements in the classroom and promotes high achieving students (Mohler).
2. Overall higher performance because students will find themselves with greater motivation to increase grades rather to risk just having a "A" in a class. Promotes getting a higher percentage grade.
3. With the two proposed solutions, the effect on GPAs, with respect to concerns around grade inflation will be minimal (Mohler).
4. Greater competitive edge in both the law school admissions process and other graduate programs. Ability for instructors to recognize students for superior achievement.
5. Adding an additional grade (e.g., A+) to the Banner system is possible. However, changing the maximum cumulative GPA would be problematic from a data integrity standpoint.

SOLUTIONS:

Option 1 – 4.33 Addition

1. Add an A+ letter grade with a grade point value of 4.33 to cover grades at the top of an A. In this option, it maintains the 4.0 scale but allows for students to achieve a GPA higher than 4.0. This allows students to earn up to a 4.3 and gives students an opportunity to recover from classes they did not do well in.
2. David Wright, Associate VP of Academic Data Systems and Strategic Planning provided the following: "One of the pillars of data integrity is consistency in metric measurement over time and across data systems. The more we deviate from that standard the more conversions that must be implemented which can lead to mistakes and errors in interpretation. Changing to a 4.33 would entail significant changes in our data systems and processing that would impact recruitment/admission, transfers, historical reporting, accreditation, state and federal reporting, and analysis."

Option 2 – Honorary A+

1. Add an A+ letter grade with a grade point value of 4.0 to allow student in the higher percentiles to be honored on their transcripts. This allows students to stand out to graduate schools and employers without having a major change in the grading scale. Maintains the standard 4.0 scale.
2. One of the KBOR universities has an A+ grade, as well as a few in TX, OK, NE and CO. Of the handful found using A+, no evidence of the A+ having an impact the GPA was found - the scale remains at 4.00. This means that they give an A+ but it carries the same grade points as the A grade

OTHER SCHOOLS:

Option 1: [Stanford University](#), [Columbia University](#), [University of Oregon](#), [Arizona State University](#), [Cornell University](#)

Option 2: [University of Memphis](#), [University of California – Berkeley](#), [University of Nebraska – Lincoln](#), [New Mexico State University](#), [University of Missouri](#), [Drake University](#)

SUMMARY:

In conversations with students, the very high-performing students take issue with the plus/minus system because of the negative impact it has on their GPAs. Most students interviewed appreciate the plus/minus system because it rewards them when they perform better and can save them from losing scholarships. Adding an A+ would mean students can recover from an A- or lower grade and potentially maintain a 4.0 GPA. Student grades should be a true reflection of their performance in a class. Including an A+ option would also give students a competitive advantage when applying to graduate and professional programs.

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