

Academic Affairs Committee Minutes
November 29, 2016

Present: Fernando Gouvea, Adrienne Carmack, Sahan Dissanayake, Jacob Adner, Jenner Foster, Lisa McDaniel, Beth Schiller, Jim Scott, Muheb Esmat, Margaret McFadden, Jim Sloat, Marta Ameri, Barbara Moore, Nadia El-Shaarawi

I. Approval of the minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were approved. All approved minutes are posted under the listing of College Committees on the Colby webpage.

II. Approval of the minor proposal from English

After discussion of a number of minor corrections and suggestions for making the proposal more streamlined, the proposal was approved by AAC, and will now be forwarded to the faculty for review. It will come to the December faculty meeting as New Business, then lay over to either January or February.

III. Further discussion of A+ grades

The committee decided to refer our persistent questions about the A+ grade to the Division Chairs for a reading on the faculty's appetite for taking up some big questions. These include: Do we want to address grade inflation? Do we want to do less with GPA in general? (Latin honors? Distinction in the major?) And perhaps most importantly: Is there a problem?

In a more general sense, the committee continued to discuss the persistent concern that the A+ is not awarded equitably across all departments and thus is perhaps disadvantaging some students. Among the questions raised were whether giving better guidance to visiting faculty would help (or whether such guidance would dissipate after a few years, returning to the problem); whether we should make the change to award only 4.0 (not 4.3) to those who earn A+ grades (and how that might affect class rank); how graduate schools view transcripts and GPAs; whether students and faculty were even aware that the A+ was possible and that it received 4.3 points in GPA calculations; whether a change in A+ would cause a change in distribution of other grades; and whether a change from 4.3 to 4 would affect how many faculty awarded the A+. Since there was no consensus on any of these questions, we will revisit this later in the academic year.