Memo

To: Professor Tenga

From: Accuracy in Grading Committee (Tariq Al-johani, Daniel Hendrickson, Eugenio Panero, Walter Schnaderbeck, Michael Torsiello)

Date: November 22, 2005

Subject: Progress on a recommendation report on Florida Tech’s GPA scale

Florida Tech’s GPA Scale
Our team is currently in the process of investigating whether or not a more accurate grading scale could be implemented at Florida Tech. This is being conducted through the use of surveys, interviews, and extensive research. This report outlines work completed and work remaining for each area of the investigation.

Surveys
The analysis of raw data for what concerns student surveys is in the process of being carried out. Basic analysis has been performed to determine what types of student need to be targeted further. Despite the fact that the desired amount of completed surveys was one hundred, and that that number has now been surpassed, several categories of students are not equally represented in the collected data.

The number of interviewed freshmen approximates a mere 13 percent, while seniors stand at about 28 percent. The number of graduates who completed polls is also lower than others, at about 16 percent. Survey taking efforts will therefore be redirected in such a manner to receive a greater amount of responses from lower classmen, such as distributing surveys in freshmen residence halls.

While targeting a specific standing may be as simple as interviewing residents of a particular hall or students of a low numbered class, other characteristics of students are not easily determinable. More than two thirds of the interviewees have a GPA which ranges between a 3.0 and a 4.0. While it is unreasonable to assume that all GPA ranges are equally represented at Florida Tech, it is necessary to understand if this is a fair representation of the student body, that is, if that same percentage of students on campus does actually have such a GPA.

One last point of concern is responses regarding the GPA scale that was adopted by the interviewee’s high school. Roughly two thirds of the questioned students had the same GPA scale as Florida Tech’s. Of the students who responded that the current GPA scale should be maintained, 75 percent were already accustomed to it. Through statistical analysis and research, it is now necessary to determine who much this plays a role in a student’s perception of Florida Tech’s GPA scale.

Currently, about 40 different majors are represented in our data, including several dual majors. Several majors, such as Computer Science and Computer Engineering, appear to stand out more than others, but not to an extreme. Overall, the representation of majors is not a point of concern.

For the distribution of the surveys we chose two different methods. Our primary method was to design a survey in Microsoft Word and to distribute them in our classes and on campus. Our goal
was for each of us to get at least 20 surveys completed giving us a total of 100 surveys. A separate teacher survey was created to be given to each team member’s professors. Our second method was an online survey which was distributed through various online message boards and e-mail. We also considered the possibility of distributing them through The Crimson as Mike is a member of that organization. However, online distribution yielded 91 student responses and putting a plug in The Crimson was deemed unnecessary.

Teacher surveys have been discarded, as a more direct approach has been deemed preferable. Interviews with Dr. Stansifer and Dr. Cudmore are in the process of being scheduled and will be carried out soon.

**Interviews**

Personal interviews with professors and registrars are able to provide direct opinions and suggestions regarding the issue of Florida Tech’s GPA scale. At the start of the project, Tariq sent out emails to registrars of universities similar in size and expertise to Florida Tech. Unfortunately, we have received no replies from that.

However, Tariq has completed an extensive interview with Charlotte Young, Florida Tech’s Registrar. This interview features 13 questions which are attached to this report. Additional interviews are in the process of being scheduled with Dr. Stansifer, an Associate Professor in the Computer Science department, and Dr. Cudmore, Assistant Professor in the Business department who serves on multiple committees for the university.

**Extensive Research**

Our research has primarily wrapped up with regards to the available grading scales used by other colleges and universities. We’ve compiled enough research to evaluate the most commonly used grading scales by U.S. universities and have made an endorsement on the scale we feel is most accurate. Although we did try to obtain information and studies from universities with comparable sizes and disciplines we found that we had to settle with studies conducted by universities of varying size from large state funded institutions to small private colleges. Most of the research from various universities was in the form of university publications that discussed why they were changing their grade scales in the same manner we are proposing. They often featured frequently asked questions in a “devil’s advocate” format and explained the grading scale changes largely for a student audience. Little information was provided from other institutions on how they logistically implemented the new systems, instead only details on trial periods for new systems were outlined.

We have completed all of the generic research in terms of grading scales but now seek research on the implementation of a new grading scale at Florida Tech. Specifically we still seek information from Florida Tech on the logistics that would be involved in changing the grade scale. This research will be primarily obtained through the interview process. Our conclusions and findings based on the research still have to be composed for our final report. Our research is primarily on schedule and provided the necessary background information to move forward with our proposal.

**Oral and Written Reports**

Preparation for oral and written reports is currently underway. The structure of the oral presentation will reflect the form of the written report. Each team member will be preparing the area of investigation with which he has worked most closely with. Work will continue on these reports immediately following Thanksgiving break.

**An Improved GPA Scale**

Three of the five scheduled internal deadlines for our project have been successfully completed and two are partially completed with continuous work being done to complete them. Our scheduled timeline has worked out in the project’s favor, allowing us to adjust our timeframe to make room for unexpected delays or set backs. There have been some shifts in team roles particularly with
regards to interviews. These shifts have occurred fluidly within our team dynamic with no negative impact on the progress of our project. With that in mind, our project looks to be well on its way to being successfully completed on time. Given the interest we have discovered especially at the administrative level we have confidence that our recommendation report could serve as a tool for change.