Question:
Why is ASU implementing Plus/Minus grades?

Response:
ASU is implementing +/- grades for two main reasons. First, the addition of +/- options provides a more accurate and fair system for recognizing student performance in coursework. Second, a +/- system brings ASU into conformity with the majority of its institutional peers, making ASU graduates more competitive with their peers from these institutions for post-baccalaureate positions.

Question:
Why does the Plus/Minus scale stop at C?

Response:
The plus/minus grading system ends at C because recognizing student grades at a finer scale below the satisfactory level is not helpful in acknowledging academic achievement. Moreover, it creates an ambiguity as to what is immediately below a satisfactory grade especially when the grade of C or better is required for a course completion for prerequisites and programs. A grade of C- with its corresponding grade point value of 1.667 effectively raises the grading scale for academic success, which is widely accepted as being a 2.0 cumulative GPA. For example, students now earning a C with its 2.0 grade point value by securing a grade average of 70, 71, or 72 in a class, would soon find that the same 70, 71, or 72 is now worth only 1.667 grade points, placing their status as a student in considerable jeopardy. We opted to keep the grade performance necessary to maintain a successful 2.0 academic standing the same by not introducing a grade option of C-.

Question:
Why is the cumulative GPA being capped at 4.00?

Response:
There is some evidence to suggest that if we allow official transcripts with cumulative grade point averages (GPA) that exceed 4.00, we run the risk of having our students' GPAs discounted when converted to the grading systems of other institutions, such that a 4.33 would translate as a 4.00, a 4.00 would come in at 3.67, and so on. There was unanimous agreement between student and faculty representatives for capping our cumulative GPA on the transcript at 4.00. A GPA that exceeds 4.00 confers no great benefit in the outside world and only invites a potential discounting of ASU’s grading system. For internal use, e.g., in the calculation of who actually has a higher GPA, GPA calculations that exceed 4.0 are available. On the unofficial transcript, the reported GPA may exceed 4.00 for a semester GPA, albeit still not for the cumulative GPA.

Hopefully this sheds some light on the thinking of the implementation committee members regarding this issue. We're always open for input, but this is an issue that was given more attention than any other, and we on the committee (students, faculty, and staff) are comfortable with this decision.
**Question:**
Every Academic Senate document I've seen dealing with the new plus/minus grade scale indicates that it will be left to the individual instructor's discretion as to whether he gives plus/minus grades. Can you clarify this?

**Response:**
A basic principle of academic freedom is that the individual instructor is responsible for the assignment of grades. ACD201 specifies that it is the instructor's right and obligation "... to assure that evaluation of students reflects the true merit of their work." No group of faculty members may dictate to another that he or she not follow the grading options permitted by the University.

Academic units may decide that a particular grading scheme for some set of core courses is desirable. If there is uniform agreement for that sentiment, then there is nothing to prevent it from happening, but it happens only because each individual instructor agrees to go along with it as being consistent with the belief that it is the best way to recognize the true merit of their students' work.

As indicated above, an individual instructor may choose not to abide by that preference of the presumed majority. The question is no different from a hypothetical one in which a group in the academic unit decided there should be no Ds assigned under the current system of grading. An instructor who disagreed would maintain the academic freedom to assign that D if he or she felt it reflected the true merit of the student's work.

**Question:**
Is there a standard in terms of the 100-point scale where people draw (or where we should draw) the cut points for these new grades? That is, our prior system was easy: >90=A; 80-89=B; 70-79=C; 60-69=D; <60=E. Is there any recommendation on where the new cut-points should be?

**Response:**
There are no recommended guidelines for establishing cut points with the +/- system, just as there are no guidelines recommended within the current system. While the conventional 90-80-70-60 system is common with the current system, it is by no means universal.

**Question:**
Can an instructor opt to give +/- grades to those students who want them and standard A, B, etc. grades to those who do not want a +/-? Or do I have to grade all students in any one class alike?

**Response:**
A basic principle of academic freedom is that the individual instructor is responsible for the assignment of grades. While an instructor can establish an individual contract with each student regarding the grading scale, the instructor could encounter complaints after grades are awarded, as students who exhibit the same performance in the same class could receive different grades.