

School of Law
Faculty Meeting
May 3, 1982
Conference Room
4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Bowler, Browde, Desiderio, DuMars, J. Ellis, W. Ellis, Fink, Flickinger, Goldberg, Gonzales, Hart, Hermann, Johnson, Kovnat, Martinez, Minzner, Muir, Norwood, Occhialino, Parnall, Romero, Scales, Schwartz, Simson, Stelzner, Teitelbaum, Utton, Winograd; Student Representative Kamm; Camp

The meeting was called to order by Dean Desiderio; minutes of the meeting of April 26, 1982, were approved.

Recommendation of the Student Affairs and Placement Committee was presented;

1. Commencing with the fall semester, 1982, all Clinical courses, with the exception of the extern programs which are not being directly supervised by clinical faculty, be graded on an A, B, C, D or F basis, and
2. Small courses and seminars continue to be graded as they currently are and will not be graded by written evaluation rather than letter grade.

Motion carried.

A petition signed by approximately eighty students was read by the Dean. Some of the "demands" have already received attention. There was discussion concerning rehabilitation of grades and appointment of a student advocate, led by Martinez and J. Ellis, with contribution by Teitelbaum, DuMars, Stelzner, and Gonzales. Further action will be handled by the Student Affairs Committee and an ad hoc committee on grades.

Dean announced that all present personnel will remain on the faculty for next academic year, although the operation expenses for the Law School will be curtailed.

Adios until next fall.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise R. Camp

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TO: Law School Faculty

FROM: Student Affairs and Placement Committee

The Student Affairs and Placement Committee met on March 10, 1982, and after consideration and discussion of the pro's and con's on the following two items, the Committee's recommendations to the Law School Faculty are:

1. That commencing with the Fall Semester, 1982, all Clinical courses, with the exception of the extern programs which are not being directly supervised by clinical faculty, be graded on an A, B, C, D or F basis, and
2. That small courses and seminars continue to be graded as they currently are (i.e., A, B, C, D, or F or credit/D or F as each faculty member requires) and that they not be graded by written evaluation rather than letter grade.

Background. Up to the present, Clinical courses, pursuant to Law Faculty decision, have been graded by written evaluation and not by letter grade. Based on shared experiences within the Law Clinic and a general dissatisfaction with this requirement, the Clinical Faculty in January, 1982, proposed that the faculty relieve the Clinic of this requirement and that future in-house Clinical courses be graded by traditional letter grades. This proposal was discussed by the law faculty and then referred to this committee for discussion and recommendation. In addition, Dean Desiderio felt that it was appropriate for the Committee to also consider a proposal that small courses and seminars be graded by written evaluation instead of letter grades or credit/D or F.

The above recommendations by this Committee are the consensus of the Committee and both are unanimous. A brief outline of considerations advanced by members of this Committee to support these recommendations are:

A. Letter Grades in Clinical Courses

1. The Clinical Faculty would prefer letter grades over written evaluations due to the practical difficulties in producing meaningful and useful written evaluations.
2. The current differences in Clinical/non-Clinical grading places an undue emphasis on courses with letter grades by both students and employers.
3. Because of the current premium students naturally place on courses with letter grades, Clinical courses are often given less priority or emphasis.
4. Letter grades would give the Clinical professor a better opportunity for more meaningful differentiation among students.

5. This differentiation would be more meaningful to students and others such as employers.

6. While there are general difficulties in determining what letter grades "mean," there is value in a uniform general grading system.

7. On occasion, some students who do not excel in traditional law school exam writing situations might excel in more practical skills, or client centered activities. Under the current grading system, these students might be denied the traditional rewards or recognition a letter grade might give.

8. The use of letter grades would make it easier to co-relate clinical course grades measuring direct lawyering competence and skills and more traditional academic courses.

9. Letter grades more closely meet student expectations.

B. Requiring Written Evaluations in Seminars and Small Courses

Since most of the pro's and con's of written evaluations vs. letter grades was fully discussed above, the discussion of this proposal was brief. Many of the reasons outlined above were felt to be equally applicable here, with additional practical problems raised in that many of the seminar or small courses are taught by adjunct faculty, and that students may concentrate their efforts and improve their performance in small seminars in expectation of letter grade recognition and rewards. Written evaluations in lieu of letter grades or credit/D or F did not seem to have any committee support either as a means of exclusive grading in these courses, or as an alternative grading system to be elected by an individual faculty member. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that this proposal not be adopted by the faculty.