

LAW IN ACTION

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

FALL 2005



This fall's entering class will be the first to receive letter-based grades.

Law School Adopts New Grade-Reporting System

Beginning in January 2006, when first-year UW law students apply for summer positions, employers will notice a significant change in how the Law School reports grade point averages. The Law School is revising the way grades are calculated and reported to simplify the grading system, make the system easier for students and employers to understand, and make UW law transcripts more internally consistent.

A Grading Policy Committee has been at work for three years, investigating the current grading system and looking at law school grading systems in use nationwide. This year, the committee submitted a plan, endorsed by the faculty, for changes that will go into effect for

the current entering class. The old system will be phased out as students who began law school under the numerical grading system (65–95) graduate.

Following is a summary of the changes that employers will notice beginning with students in this fall's entering class:

- A new scale with 13 grading cells, using A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, and F. This system will use decimal equivalents ranging from 4.3 to 0 for purposes of computing a GPA.
- A four-cell grading system (S+, S, S-, and U) for clinical courses and for other courses where there is concern that the 13-cell system

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Help Extended to Law Students After Hurricane

As incoming first-year students arrived at the Law School for orientation events the week of August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. The Law School's reaction to the tragedy since those desperate hours was both swift and effective.

The Law School immediately posted information on its Web site offering admissions opportunities to students affected by the storm. Mike Hall, assistant dean for admissions and financial aid at the Law School, spoke with and counseled dozens of displaced students throughout the weekend and the following week as conditions in New Orleans deteriorated.

Seven students who were displaced from Tulane and Loyola became part of the UW Law School community.

"My goal during this sensitive time was to take into account the interests of each student and function not only as admissions officer, but also as a general adviser, helping the law students affected by this tragedy think through their options, whether they ultimately came here or went elsewhere," he says.

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PASKUS STUDIO



Listening

One of the priorities of my deanship and of the Law School's Strategic Plan has been to increase the Law School's connection with the practicing bar and with alumni. As a result, we are learning a lot about ourselves.

We have learned from you, for instance, that we need to challenge some of our long-standing practices. And we are responding to your suggestions and concerns. One example is your concern about our numerical (65-95) grading system. Of course, no grading system is perfect, but in discussions with you, we learned that our system was more complex and difficult to understand than we recognized. Your concerns became the focus of a faculty committee

that studied the options and recommended the revised grading system discussed in this newsletter.

We are also learning a great deal about ourselves as we prepare for our ABA Site Visit and Re-Accreditation, which will occur in March. As part of the self-study process, we have invited speakers from a number of our constituent groups, and we had the pleasure of hearing outside views of the Law School from Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson, Chancellor John Wiley, and a panel of bar leaders, including former State Bar presidents Lane Ware (Wausau) and Michelle Behnke (Madison); and Jennifer Mirus, past president of the Legal Association for Women (Madison chapter).

Our connection to you is an important part of who we are and how we will meet the challenges of tomorrow. Fostering a culture of participation and shared enterprise will help us see ourselves through your eyes and enable us to continue to improve how we meet our mission as the state's only public law school while remaining one of the nation's preeminent law schools. I look forward to a continuing dialogue about how we can work together to keep the UW Law School strong.

— Dean Kenneth B. Davis, Jr.

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would be undesirable. This will permit some acknowledgment of the quality of performance to appear on the transcript, but will not affect the GPA.

- Legal writing courses will be graded using letter grades on the same basis as other courses.
- Law reviews and moot court programs, which currently lack an evaluative component, will continue to show on the transcript as S.

“It has been a long time since the Law School sought to systematically review its grading system and practices,” comments Professor John Kidwell, chair of the Grading Policy Committee. “After careful review, we decided that a change seemed appropriate and timely.”

More detailed information about the change will be available on the Law School Web site.

Update Your Address

Have you moved, changed jobs, or changed your email address? Help us stay in touch with you. To ensure that you continue to get your *Gargoyle* magazine and your newsletter, please update your information, including your email.

You can update your information on-line at www.uwalumni.com (click on “Update Your Records”) or send an email with your new information directly to the Law School, LFTthomp1@wisc.edu.

Mid-Year Grads: If you wish to have your reunion class year changed to a different “preferred” year, please let us know.

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