

# Enhancing the Academic Environment

## A Four Point Plan

The 2005-2006 MBA Executive Committee recommends the following comprehensive four point plan to enhance the academic environment at Wharton.

### I. Shaping a Culture of Teaching and Learning

The Committee recommends that the administration work with faculty and students to shape a culture of excellence in teaching and learning. In particular, the Committee recommends consideration of the following initial steps to promote continual improvement.

- Administrative annunciation of Concert Rules (see Appendix 1) as the expected norms for classroom etiquette.
- In courses where attendance is required, encourage faculty to articulate strict attendance requirements with explicit penalties for violations, such as an automatic drop. Where needed, provide support to facilitate attendance taking.
- Monitor and minimize extracurricular conflicts with classes
- Encourage faculty to explicitly reward class preparation. For example, disseminate best practice strategies for cold calling, quizzes, written participation and other methods across faculty.
- Develop explicit initiatives to protect and encourage a culture of real student cooperation. For example, reward student-to-student mentoring within classes.
- Develop methods to quickly identify and respond to concerns regarding teaching problems. For example, set up formal channels to monitor and respond to student concerns about teaching as they occur.

Recognizing that shaping culture is a long term evolutionary goal, the Committee recommends the creation of an oversight subcommittee of administrators, faculty and students to actively monitor progress towards this goal.

### II. Reforming the MBA Recruiting Process

The Committee recommends that the administration undertake a comprehensive reform of the recruiting process to improve efficiency. The goal should be to minimize time demands and stress on students, but without adversely affecting student career opportunities or employer experience of the recruiting environment. Discussions with both students and employers indicate such reform is both feasible and desirable. In getting started, the following initiatives should be pursued.

- Create a clear policy for employers that forbids recruiting conflicts with classes; help students reschedule recruiting commitments to avoid conflict with the academic calendar.

- Increase the efficiency of 1st year recruiting activity by working with student clubs and employers to deliver events that focus primarily on informing students about industries, functions, and companies during Q1, while delaying purely evaluative employer activities to as late as possible in the first year.
- Promote an open channel for interview lists for on-campus recruiting by introducing a bid/auction system.
- Explore initiatives such as career-fairs and a DIP period for 2nd years to achieve efficiency in the recruiting process and mitigate conflicts with academic commitments.
- Work actively with student groups and employers to build consensus with respect to changes.

### III. Statement of the Wharton Grade Disclosure Policy

The Committee recommends that, subject to faculty approval, the administration disseminate and implement the following Wharton Grade Disclosure Policy.

**Wharton students are free to disclose any aspect of their own academic transcripts to prospective employers or any other interested parties, and are encouraged to do so. Such disclosure is a legal right and it is Wharton policy to protect this right. Prospective employers are free to request from students any aspect of their academic transcripts.**

### IV. Implement the New Wharton MBA Grading System

The Committee recommends that, subject to faculty approval, the administration implement the new Wharton MBA Grading System as described in Appendix 2. The Committee further recommends that the administration implement a web based system to facilitate electronic grade submission.

## Appendix 1: Concert Rules

Concert Rules refers to the five following expected norms for classroom etiquette.

1. Students are to sit according to a seating chart.
2. Class will begin and end exactly on time.
3. Late arrival is strongly discouraged.
4. Reentering class after leaving is strongly discouraged.
5. Electronic devices must be turned off prior to class.

Referring to the environment one ordinarily finds at an orchestral performance, Concert Rules becomes an intuitively understood package of guidelines that is easily communicated. The particulars and the extent of the implementation of Concert Rules in each class is entirely up to the instructor.

## Appendix 2: The New Wharton MBA Grading System

1. **Letter Grades and Point Values:** Adopt the traditional grading system with letter grades A/B/C/D/F with + and – distinctions. The letter grades will carry the usual point values A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0. The +’s and –’s will trisect the interval between full letter grades; *i.e.*, a + grade will be 0.33 above the full grade value and a – grade 0.33 below. A+’s will be allowed but will still carry a 4.0 point value, a University of Pennsylvania policy.
2. **Upper Limit on CMGPA:** CMGPA (Class MBA Grade Point Average) will here refer to the average point value of the grades assigned to the MBA students in a class. For MBA classes with an MBA enrollment of 20 or more at the conclusion of the course, the CMGPA may not exceed 3.33. The following conditions will apply:
  - a. **Multiple sections of a course:** When faculty teach multiple sections of a course in a semester, they may choose to aggregate the students across multiple sections for assigning grades and computing the CMGPA.
  - b. **Small enrollment courses:** When the number of MBA students enrolled in a course is fewer than 20, the CMGPA Upper Limit is linearly modified as follows:
 
$$\text{CMGPA Upper Limit} = 3.33 + 0.04(20 - E)^+,$$
 where  $E$  is the MBA enrollment of the course at its conclusion. In words, the upper limit CMGPA is raised by 0.04 for every enrollment count below 20. This upper limit modification applies to all MBA courses including electives and ASPs.
  - c. **Courses with a mixed population (MBA and non-MBA) of students:** A number of MBA courses have non-MBA enrollments. The non-MBA students in these courses are graded on the grading basis of their home schools and the CMGPA Upper Limit is computed only with respect to the MBA population of these courses according to the criteria above. Faculty teaching courses with mixed populations will receive separate grade sheets for non-MBA students.
  - d. **Enforcement:** Course grade submissions will not be accepted if the CMGPA Upper Limit is exceeded. Any exemptions for special circumstances must be approved by the Vice Dean of the Graduate Division.
3. **Pass-Fail Option:** Each student may take up to 1 elective credit unit PASS-FAIL each semester (with the instructor’s permission). PASS grades will be excluded from individual GPA calculations; FAIL grades will be included. This Pass-Fail option does not supersede departmental conditions for majors.
4. **Grandfathering the Class of 2007:** The new grading system will apply exclusively to the students in the class of 2008 and beyond. Students in the class of 2007 will continue to be graded on the current scale in all of their classes. All aspects of the CMGPA Upper Limit described above will apply only to those students in the class of 2008 and beyond who are enrolled in each class.
5. **Minimum Academic Standards and Academic Honors:** For the classes of 2006 and 2007, the current criteria with respect to academic probation and dismissal will remain extant. For the class of 2008 and beyond, a grade of F will be equivalent to an NC and the NC-based probation and dismissal criteria will remain in place. Faculty will continue to report to the MBA Office the bottom 10% list of students in their classes. These implicit “QC” designations, as well as F (= NC) grades, will continue to be the basis of dismissal as per the current rules. After a year or two of experience with the new grading system, the MBA Executive Committee will consider recasting probation and dismissal criteria in terms of GPA thresholds. Any proposed changes will then go through the usual faculty approval process. There is no change to the computation of academic honors.