CAP Survey Asks Students To Rank 4 Grading Systems

Grades, from Page 1

though they do not have voting power.

All proposals would eventually come to a vote at a faculty meeting.
Wilson hopes that if students want a change, the faculty will vote on one by the end of this academic year.

Survey offers four choices

The survey asks students to rank four possible systems for assigning grades and to explain their reasoning. Any changes are not meant to change the overall distribution of grades, but to more finely distinguish the range between each letter grade, Wilson said.

The first choice is the present system.
The second choice would create an intermediate grade between each existing letter grade. Thus, students could receive an A, AB, B, BC, C, D, and F. The intermediate grades would be worth 4.5 for an AB, 3.5 for a BC, and 2.5 for a CD.
The third choice presents even finer distinction between the letter grades, adding both pluses and minuses: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, and F. Each plus is 0.3 points higher than the letter grade; each minus is 0.3 less. For example, an A+ is a 4.7 and a C- is a 3.3.
The fourth choice is basically the same as the third, with the addition of A+ and D-. These two grades would be worth the same as an A (5.0) and a D (2.0), but the extra plus and minus are just a way of indicating exceptionally good or bad performances on the transcript.

Finally, the survey asks students if they would favor changing to a 4.0 system, like many other U.S. universities.

All of the Ivy League schools, except Brown University, use a plus-minus system, said Michael R. Joo '95, a student member of the CAP. While letter grades relieve the stress of getting an A over an A-, the current numerical jump between letter grades is too large, Joo said.
The system of intermediate grades provides a medium between these two options, he said.

Both the ABCDF system and the 5.0 scale are features unique to MIT, Joo said. "I think a lot of people are so set in their ways that it might be hard to change," he said.

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