

Grades approved at UCSC

By MATT SPEISER

The UC-Santa Cruz faculty has decided to change the school's controversial grading system to offer students the option of receiving supplementary letter grades in their upper-division classes.

Ballots, counted this morning from a month-long mail vote, showed a final tally of 111 faculty members in favor of the proposal and 108 opposed.

Beginning next fall, students will be given the option of receiving letter grades in addition to the school's unique narrative evaluations, which appraise performance in paragraph-long descriptions by the instructor. Freshman and sophomore classes will continue to offer only the narrative evaluations unless a petition is filed to do otherwise.

The proposal adopted by the Academic Senate is, in theory, not a great departure from the present policy in which upper-division classes give the option of supplementary letter grades. However, in practice very few students have taken this option. Those who do are mostly in science classes.

Under the proposal adopted today the letter-grade option will automatically be offered in every upper-division class. Upon enrollment in the class, students will be expected to declare whether they will take the supplementary grades. The proposal

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adopted by the Academic Senate must be accepted by the university central administration, but "that approval is expected to be automatic," according to Tom O'Leary, UCSC public information officer.

The grade option proposal and ones like it have been kicked around for several years. Late last year UCSC admissions dean Richard Moll proposed that the evaluation grading system be altered to correct outsiders' perceptions of the campus

and thus improve the pool of prospective applicants for admission. Moll argued that the narrative evaluation system gave people the impression the school was not as rigorous as those offering letter grades and that UCSC students were hindered in gaining admission to graduate schools because they were lacking a grade-point average.

A similar proposal to offer a grade option was adopted by the Academic Senate two years ago, but after a particularly emotional student protest the faculty reversed its position. The students argued that the introduction of grades would undermine the campus's "non-competitive nature," in which students "learn for learning's sake."

This year's grading proposal met with similar distaste by the students, who staged several protests, including one rally last winter in which several hundred students met with the Academic Senate to consider several grading proposals.

Originally, a committee of the Academic Senate had proposed students be given marks of "pass," "honors" or "fail" in addition to their narrative evaluations. This would have eliminated the present "no record" system, in which no trace of a student's enrollment in a course is recorded if he or she fails. The proposal was later changed to what was approved today.