TO: SUNY Cortland Faculty

FROM: Dr. Chris Widdall
                Chair, Educational Policy Committee

DATE: May 15, 2017

RE: Change in A+ = 4.3 grading at SUNY Cortland

The Education Policy Committee (EPC) was asked to review SUNY Cortland's current A+ = 4.3 grading scale as found in the College Handbook, Chapter 415: General Academic Policies and Regulations section 415.02, and the College Catalog, Academic Polices – Quality Points/Grade Point Average, undergraduate and graduate.

Based on research from other SUNY campuses (https://www.suny.edu/campuses/), we found that Cortland is one of two SUNY campus utilizing a 4.3 scale. While having the ability to earn a 4.3 benefits some students, it disadvantages others in greater numbers. Data on the use of A+ showed that the campus use of A+ is widely different between programs. Many faculty on campus do not philosophically believe in awarding an A+, therefore not allowing some the opportunity to earn an A+.

Additionally, students who apply for off-campus scholarships or take graduate entrance exams are disadvantaged because their GPA is normalized down to a 4.0 scale for comparison purposes.

The EPC proposed two options in the vetting document for consideration at SUNY Cortland:

Option 1: A+ grade would remain as an honors designation but would carry the 4.0 quality points and be equivalent to an A (similar to how the H is used in the U, S, H grading scale).

Option 2: Retire the A+ grade and change to a 4.0 grading scale with a maximum grade of A.

The findings were 99% (n56) in favor of retiring the A+ = 4.3 quality points scale and realign the quality point process to be an A or A+ = 4.0 quality points. The data on the two options were not as clearly defined with some of the respondents indicating support for maintaining the A+ as a honors designation with the A+ = 4.0 quality point scale, while the majority defended the

complete removal of the A+ to ensure less confusion and stronger alignment with other institutions of higher education, specifically with graduate school admission processes.

The EPC committee considered all comments and again reviewed the use of the A+ as an honor from other SUNY campuses (https://www.suny.edu/campuses/) and found that there are only a couple institutions that use a A+ honor model, reinforcing the consideration for the full removal of the A+ use to support alignment of SUNY Cortland's Quality Points/Grade Point Average with other higher education institutions.

EPC is recommending that SUNY Cortland: Retire the A+ grading scale to a maximum grade of A and align the quality points to a 4.0 scale (A=4.0). EPC is recommending the changes be effective in the 2018 – 2019 catalog. No grades (quality points) earned prior to the change going into effect will be affected.

Recommendation:

Retire the A+ grade and change to a 4.0 grading scale with a maximum grade of A.

Suggested changes to the catalog and handbook:

Quality Points/Grade Point Average

A student's level of scholarship is determined by the following system of quality points per credit hour:

A+ = 4.3 ~~~~ Simply remove this block	B+ = 3.3	C+ = 2.3	D+ = 1.3	E
A = 4.0	B = 3.0	C = 2.0	D = 1.0	
A- = 3.7	B- = 2.7	C- = 1.7	D- = .7	

Grade point averages are determined by dividing the total number of quality points by the total number of credit hours for which a student has been graded. For example, a grade of C in a three-credit-hour course is equivalent to six quality points. If a student completes 17 credit hours of course work and accumulates 38 quality points, the grade point average will be 2.235. ~~Although it is possible to attain a 4.3 grade point average, the College considers the method a 4.0 grading system.~~