

The background features a dark, textured surface with various white, chalk-like sketches of educational and scientific icons. These include a large letter 'V' in the top left, a globe in the top center, a microscope on the left side, a stack of books at the bottom left, a plus sign and a percentage sign at the bottom center, and a less-than sign at the bottom right. A large, solid white rectangle is positioned in the upper right, serving as a backdrop for the title.

Plus/Minus Grading

Is it Time for a Modification to Auburn's Grading System?

Report to University Senate by Academic Standards Committee, November 15, 2016

Charge to Academic Standards Committee

At the meeting of the Steering Committee on August 4, 2016, the Academic Standards Committee was charged to study whether Auburn should adopt a grading system that includes plus and minus grades.

In deciding whether to make such a recommendation, your committee should gather information about the grading systems used by some of our peer universities, including major universities in our region. It was suggested in the meeting that much of this data is already available in the Registrar's Office for the purpose of assigning transfer credit.

Our Process

Review SEC and
SREB schools

Review empirical
literature

Collect faculty
and student
perceptions

Recommendation

A dark grey background with a collage of white, chalk-like sketches of educational items. On the left, there's a globe, a stack of books, and a ruler. On the right, there's a microscope and more books. Various geometric shapes and symbols are scattered throughout.

What do Our Peers Do?

Grading Practices in the SEC and SREB

-Detailed description of peer institutional grading practices in full report

Grading Systems in Peer Institutions

- We have 25 peer institutions in the SEC and SREB
- 18 use some form of plus/minus grading
 - Some use pluses only
 - Some use A+ and some do not
 - Some use C- and some do not

A dark grey background featuring a collage of white line-art icons. These include a globe, a stack of books, a microscope, a test tube, a magnifying glass, a pencil, a ruler, and various geometric shapes like circles and rectangles.

What Does the Research Say?

Literature Review

-List of references and annotated bibliographies in full report

Plus Minus Grading

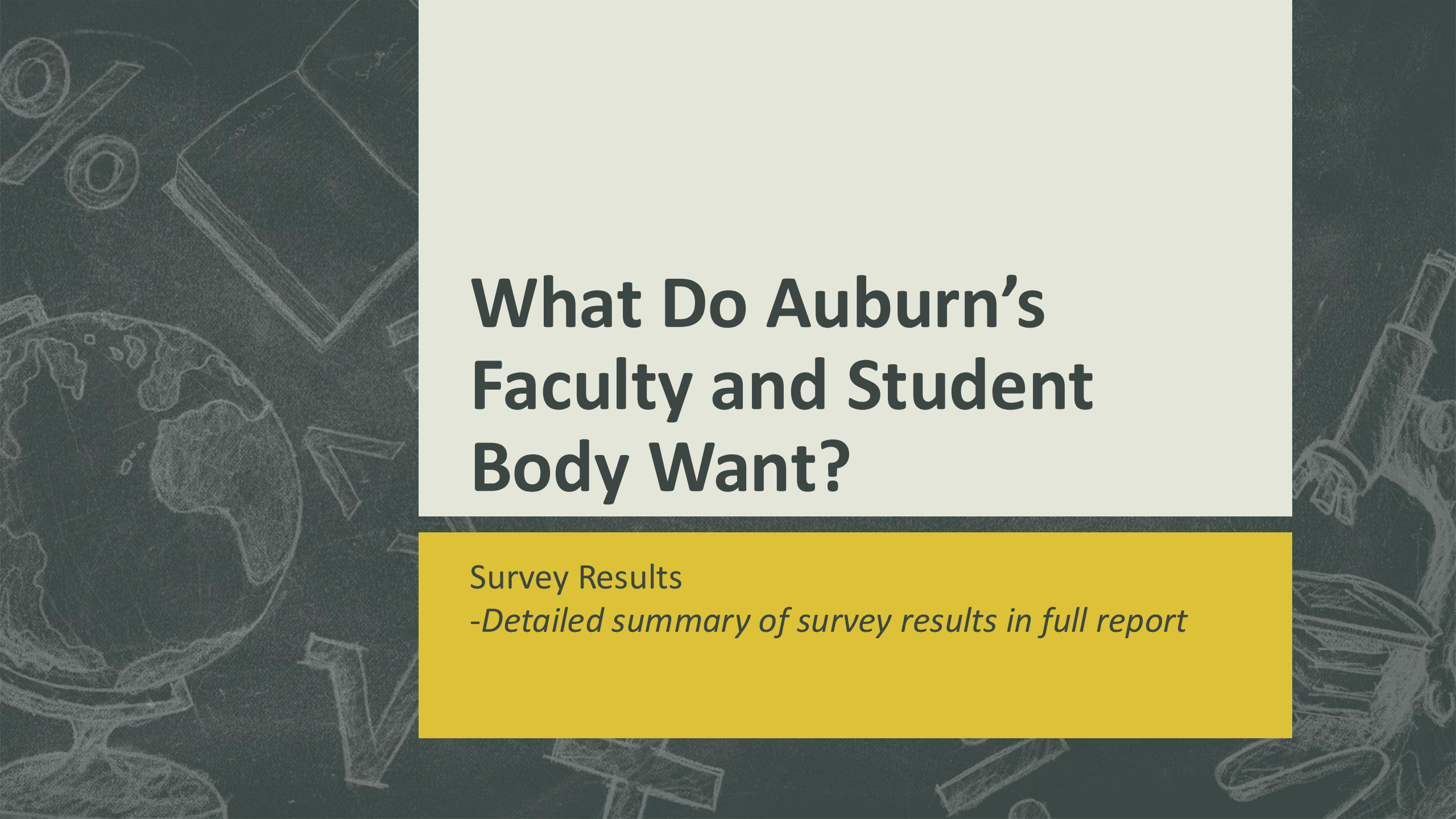
(very limited empirical support for either pros or cons)

PROS

- More finely differentiate levels of student performance
- May increase student motivation
- May reduce grade inflation
- May improve student opportunities for employment/graduate school

CONS

- Most students oppose plus/minus grading
- May increase students challenging their grades
- May cause drop in GPAs
- *Significant administrative work to modify our grading system (Committee concerns)*
- *Unintended consequences around student probation, retention, and graduation rates (Committee concerns)*

The background features a dark, textured collage of white line-art icons representing various academic fields: a globe, a microscope, a book, a percentage sign, a compass, and a satellite.

What Do Auburn's Faculty and Student Body Want?

Survey Results

-Detailed summary of survey results in full report

Participation Summary

<i>Overall faculty response rate approximately 50%</i>	% Faculty Respondents (620 Total)	% Student Respondents (2180 Total)	<i>Overall student response rate approximately 8%</i>
Liberal Arts	29%	15%	
Engineering	13%	18%	
COSAM	10%	16%	
Business	7%	16%	
All others	<10%	<10%	

Support for Modification of Grading System

FACULTY (n = 620)

- Split just about down the middle
- Depending on how we asked the question, 47% or 53% agreed or strongly agreed with modification
- 20% or 17% were neutral
- 33% or 30% preferred the status quo
- Neutral + status quo: 53% or 47% support the status quo

STUDENTS (n = 2180)

- Strongly united against making a change
- Depending on how we asked the question, 8% or 9% agreed or strongly agreed with modification
- 5% were neutral
- 87% or 86% preferred the status quo
- Neutral + status quo: 92% or 91% support the status quo

Our Recommendation

- We did not find compelling reason to modify our current grading system at Auburn University.
- 100% committee support for this recommendation