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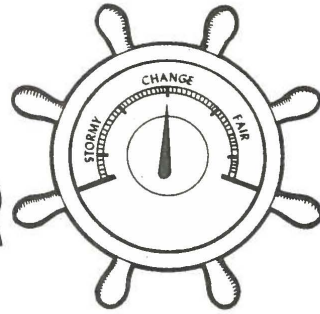
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The BAROMETER



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WEEK OF 14 FEBRUARY 1972

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SMC #2034

The BAROMETER is a student newspaper for the exchange of ideas and information concerning the development and improvement of the professional environment at NPS and within the U. S. Navy.

OFFICERS, FACULTY, STAFF and WIVES
are invited to contribute articles
of interest to the BAROMETER,
c/o The Editor.

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GUEST QUOTATION: December 1971 Officer Personnel Newsletter

by Vice Admiral Fitzhugh Lee

"What kind of a career pattern should an unrestricted line officer have?" Boards reach opinions which may vary slightly from year to year, but I think most boards would say that there are no "fixed" career patterns, no super highways to success. Recognizing that the Navy exists to fight at sea, it is fundamental that the line officer be qualified in the art of naval warfare. (This is now interpreted to be at least two operational tours in his primary warfare specialty with department head level experience.) Concurrently, the officer should have acquired and demonstrated excellence in technical, management, or planning jobs in the shore establishment. The principal questions to be resolved by the board are first, how well has the officer performed in difficult assignments both at sea and ashore; second, does he possess operational (or managerial) qualifications commensurate with his grade; and third, what additional qualifications has he gained along the way and how effectively has he used them? There are countless duty patterns which will provide satisfactory answers to the above. In the final analysis, the officer who, in a succession of tough and demanding jobs, gets generally topnotch marks, with but a few lapses, will get the nod over the man who has had nothing but easy jobs with little responsibility even though the latter's fitness reports seem appreciably better.

I should not close this dissertation without emphasizing that these observations are based on my personal experience; however, I think they would agree quite closely with all the other board members with whom I have served. They are not set down by an edict from the Secretary or BUPERS. This is good. The boards are told what the Chief of Naval Personnel thinks the Navy needs most in broad terms, and it's up to the selection boards to do their best.

I am personally convinced, after looking at the promotion systems of many civilian organizations, of foreign navies, and of our own services in the Department of Defense, that none has better selection system than the one we have evolved. Ours is far from perfect; however, we can indeed be thankful that our selection system is completely free from such things as nepotism, marrying the boss' daughter, owning stock in the company, and having the top jobs nabbed by superior talent hired away from another company. All these things occur in the selection systems which affect most of our fellow Americans.

Student Body Meeting

Tuesday, 1 February a meeting was held in King Hall to explain some of the details of two grading systems to the Student Body. The meeting has good attendance as volunteer meetings go, and the 273 who attended showed considerable interest in the presentations by Dean Lockhart, Dean of Curricula, who represented the Academic Council, Professor Schultz who represented the Faculty Scholarship Committee, and Professor Gawain who presented a summary of the Operational Grading System being tested in the Aero Department. Professor Schultz and Dean Lockhart tried to explain the events which have led up to the adoption by the Academic Council of the "Plus-Minus" system. Basically the system originated in an effort to provide the teacher greater flexibility in describing the achievement of the student. The new system as explained includes more than just addition of plus and minus grades. The grading system is converted to a 4.0 system from the 3.0 system previously used. Also some courses were instituted for which a pass or fail grade could be earned. The basic point made by these two speakers was that the changes were not expected to change appreciably the grade pattern of the greater percentage of students as far as the QPR is concerned.

On the other hand Professor Gawain did a rather effective job of presenting the merits of the Aero "Operational System" which is under trial until 1974. At that time the proposed system will be either adopted in its present or a modified form for the entire school, or it will be cancelled. It was pointed out that "a majority of the faculty" is opposed to the Experimental Program.

Where do we stand now? What good was the meeting for those who attended it? The purpose of the meeting was to explain some of the details of the two systems before a referendum concerning grading systems at NPS was conducted by the Student Council. This referendum which is to be collected before this issue of the Barometer reaches the street is intended to demonstrate the student feeling about the various systems, so that the Academic Council, for one, can get a feedback about the new system. What happens then depends upon what happens in the referendum and what happens as the system is implemented.

Operational System: An article by Professors Gawain and Lindsey was begun in the last issue of The Barometer and an excerpt from the remainder of the article is included here. As Professor Gawain stated in his presentation at the Student Body meeting, one of the hurdles to be jumped in evaluating the system is the lack of understanding of what the system is and what it is intended to accomplish. In the light of the meeting, the remainder of the article is even more important.

Some Typical Questions and Answers About the New Grading System

Some of the more commonly repeated questions that have been raised in connection with the new system are summarized below, along with corresponding answers.

- Q: Does the operational system affect the statement of degree requirements?
 A: Yes. The grading system and the degree requirements constitute two correlated parts of the overall academic decision-making machinery. The change in grading implies some corresponding rewording of the detailed degree requirements.
- Q: Doesn't the new system involve a lowering of academic quality or standards?
 A: No it doesn't. Academic quality and standards are determined by such factors as the degree requirements, excellence of the faculty and so forth. The proposed system should encourage more careful attention to what the degree requirements really are, since it ties the grades directly to them.
- Q: The new system embodies a provision for removing deficiencies so that an initial grade of I (incomplete or deficient) might subsequently be changed to some better final grade. Isn't this impractical to administer? Doesn't it involve too much work for the teacher?
 A: Use of the I grade is at the teacher's discretion. Teachers who consider it impractical will not use it. Those who do elect to use it thereby gain the opportunity to direct the student's efforts toward remedial action. This is more constructive than merely penalizing the student for past deficiencies.

Q: Why bother with an honors grade at all? Why not adopt a simple pass/fail system?

A: The answer to this depends on whether the School chooses to recognize two levels of academic attainment, one denoted by the standard degree the other by the degree with honors. If it does, then the honors grade serves a necessary academic purpose and should be retained. If the School elects to dispense with the honors degree, then the honors grade becomes superfluous and probably should be dropped.

Q: Doesn't the new system unduly handicap students who may subsequently transfer to other schools?

A: The experience of other schools which are experimenting with various new grading systems suggests that while this problem does occasionally arise, it is not a major one. Moreover, a surprisingly large fraction of the schools in the country have been experimenting with changes in their grading systems in the past five years, so that there is less and less novelty in the situation. Schools are gradually adjusting their admission policies to meet these changing circumstances. Still we must concede that there is a residual problem here; it will take some educating of the educators to overcome this fully.

Results of Student Body Referendum

From: Chairman, Student Council
To: Provost Clauser
Chairman, Academic Council

Subj: Grading System at NPS

1. During the past two weeks the Student Council has conducted a program to provide information to the student body relating to grading systems at NPS. Included was a handout describing both the recently adopted plus/minus system and the operational system presently under evaluation in the Aeronautics Department. Additionally, a student body meeting was held at which the students had the opportunity to hear Professors Schultz and Gawain describe the above mentioned systems. Following the student body meeting, a referendum was conducted to ascertain student body opinion relating to grading systems at NPS. The results of the referendum are included as Enclosure (1).

2. There are three conclusions which have been derived from the results of the referendum, the discussion following the student body meeting, and from individual communications with students:

a. It is apparent that the officers at NPS consider individual grades and cumulative grade point averages as generally unimportant and irrelevant to their service careers. Rather, a grading system seems to be preferred which will provide basic standards of measurement for feedback purposes and at the same time minimize the competition for grades per se, thereby promoting an academic environment more conducive to the maximum learning process.

b. It is also evident that the student body is doubtful whether an instructor can objectively grade on a more finely differentiated grading system. The students would therefore prefer a coarse differentiation between grades rather than a finer differentiation.

c. The student body is most concerned that the historical concept of all "B" grades earning graduate credit be maintained, regardless of the system eventually implemented. Specifically, students consider the failing B- grade of the plus/minus system as an indirect increase of the quality point rating required for graduate credit.

3. In view of the above conclusions, the Student Council therefore requests that the Academic Council consider the following:

a. Implementation of the plus/minus grading system be held in abeyance, thereby effectively reinstating the ABC system utilized prior to QTR III. In the event that this proposal is not acceptable to the Academic Council, it is strongly recommended that the basis for assigning quality points in the plus/minus system be revised so that any "B" grade constitutes graduate credit.

b. A pass/fail system similar to the Aeronautics Department operational system be implemented as soon as practicable at NPS, but in no case later than upon the conclusion of the three year evaluation period.

Respectfully,
R. L. CHAMPOUX
Student Council Chairman

Results of Student Body Referendum

A. Coverage. Number of ballots counted: 1,364 (82% of the student body)

B. ABC and Plus/Minus Comparisons.

The individual was asked to rank the ABC, Plus/Minus and Pass/Fail systems.
Considering only the ABC versus the Plus/Minus ranking:

1,011/74% preferred the ABC system

353/26% preferred the Plus/Minus system

C. Comparison of All Systems

The individual was asked to indicate which system he preferred most:

427/31.3% preferred the ABC system most

168/12.3% preferred the Plus/Minus system most

769/56.3% preferred the Pass/Fail system most

NEXT? The first summary of the results of the Z-gram questionnaire will be published in the next issue of the Barometer.