MEMORANDUM

TO: Nariman Farvardin  
    Dean, A. James Clark School of Engineering

FROM: Victor Korenman  
    Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Programs

SUBJECT: Proposal to Require a Grade of ‘C’ or Better in All Technical Courses Used to Satisfy Major Requirements (PCC Log No. 04009)

At its meeting on September 10, 2004, the Senate Committee on Programs, Curricula, and Courses approved your proposal to require a grade of ‘C’ or better in all technical courses used to satisfy major requirements. A copy of the approved proposal is enclosed.

Please note that ‘C’ or better does include the grade of ‘C-’. Note also that students are not required to attain a ‘C’ in technical courses that they are not applying to major requirements.

The change is effective for students enrolling in Engineering in Spring 2005 or later. The School should ensure that this change is appropriately reflected in all university documentation, and that all advisors are informed.

VK:sfm
Enclosure

Cc: Dr. Sylvester Gates, Chair, Senate PCC
    Dr. Mary Giles, University Senate
    Ms. Barbara Hope, Data Administration
    Dr. Phyllis Peres, Undergraduate Studies
    Ms. Anne Turkos, Archives
    Dr. Gary Pertmer, A. James Clark School of Engineering
    Dr. Linda Yokoi, Records & Registrations
DATE SUBMITTED 1 December 2003

COLLEGE/SCHOOL  A. James Clark School of Engineering

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM  All

PROPOSED ACTION (A separate form for each) ADD_____ DELETE_____ CHANGE_X

DESCRIPTION (Provide a succinct account of the proposed action. Additional detail may be provided in an attachment. Provide old and new sample programs for curriculum changes.)

The School of Engineering is proposing to require a grade of ‘C’ or better in all technical courses that a student uses to satisfy his/her major requirements. This policy will apply to all major programs in the School. The current policy requires a ‘C’ or better in all engineering courses (EN___) as well as three ‘gateway’ courses - MATH 141, PHYS 161, and CHEM 135. The new policy would expand this list to include all technical courses.

JUSTIFICATION/REASONS/RESOURCES (Explain the reason for the proposed action. Identify the source of new resources that may be required. Attach additional material if needed.)

Please see attached

APPROVAL SIGNATURES

1. Department Committee Chair 

2. Department Chair 

3. College/School PCC Chair

4. Dean 

5. Dean of the Graduate School (if required) 

6. Chair, Senate PCC 

7. Chair of Senate 

8. Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost 

DATE

7/9/04

9/10/04

9/10/04

VPAAP Rev. 2/2/98
Proposal to Require ‘C’ or Better in All Technical Courses Applied to Major Program

Fundamental Courses

In all engineering disciplines, it’s critical that the student have a solid understanding of the fundamental subjects (mathematics, physics, and chemistry) since these are the foundation on which subsequent engineering courses are built.

Currently, the School requires that the student receive a ‘C’ or better in only three of the basic courses (the so-called gateway courses) - Calculus 2 (MATH 141), Physics I (PHYS 161), and Chemistry (CHEM 135 or CHEM 113). A student who does not meet this requirement must either retake the course(s) successfully or leave the School.

Under the current policy, a student could receive a ‘D’ in any of the other fundamental courses - three mathematics courses and two physics courses - and continue in Engineering. This is clearly inconsistent, and sends a wrong message to our students, in addition to having them unprepared for their engineering courses.

Other Technical Courses

Students in each of the engineering curricula take other technical courses outside of EN. These courses are either required (e.g. CHEM 233 for Chemical Engineering students) or electives (e.g. MATH 4xx for Electrical Engineering students). Current policy allows a ‘D’ in these non-engineering courses.

Current School Policy

In addition to the required ‘C’ or better in the gateway courses, a student must receive a grade of ‘C’ or better in all EN _ _ courses in his/her curriculum in order to fulfill graduation requirements.

Proposed New School Policy

Accepting a grade of ‘D’ in the fundamental mathematics and science courses, as well as in non-engineering technical courses, is contradictory to the ‘C’ policy for all EN _ _ courses. According to the University Undergraduate Catalog, a ‘C’ represents acceptable mastery of the subject whereas a ‘D’ represents ‘borderline understanding, does not represent satisfactory progress to a degree’. For the basic math and science courses, ‘D’ grades indicate that the student is not adequately prepared to use these fundamental tools. For upper level technical courses, allowing a grade of ‘D’ gives the impression that these courses are not as important as EN courses, in which at least a ‘C’ is required.

The proposed new policy is that a student must receive a grade of ‘C’ or better in all technical courses, both engineering (EN _ _) and non-engineering (specifically MATH, CMSC, PHYS, CHEM, STAT, AMSC, BSCI, BCHM) used to satisfy major requirements.