

Princeton USG Senate  
Meeting 1  
January 30th, 2022  
8:00 pm EST



### Introduction

1. Introduction to USG Senate (Mayu Takeuchi, 10 minutes)
  - a. Reframing our approach to mental health and student well-being
2. Welcome & Retreat (Hannah Kapoor, 5 minutes)
3. Question and Answer Session (5 minutes)
4. President's Report (Mayu Takeuchi, 10 minutes)

### New Business

1. Voting and constitutional procedures (Kate Liu, 5 minutes)
2. Senate Confirmations (5 minutes)
3. Fall 2021 Midterm Grades, Referendum Position Paper Review (Austin Davis, 10 minutes)
4. COVID: Decision-making and process (Mayu Takeuchi, 5 minutes)

### Consent Agenda

- a. Website Manager - Ceon Sun '23
  - i. Hi Princeton! I'm Ceon, a junior from Jackson, New Jersey. I'm concentrating in economics and the political economy program. This is my fifth term serving on USG, and I look forward to continuing to work on policy issues across campus! I also plan on working towards greater transparency and helping to keep the university community updated on what we do. Outside of USG, I'm on the e-board of Princeton Model Congress, a Matriculate advising fellow, and officer at my eating club. Feel free to get in touch with me at [cysun@princeton.edu](mailto:cysun@princeton.edu) anytime or whenever you see me around!
- b. USLC Chair - Avi Attar '25
  - i. Hey! My name is Avi Attar and I'm a first year from Massachusetts. I am excited to serve as USLC Chair this year and will focus on making the student experience at Princeton as awesome as it can be. Priorities for the committee this year include COVID and the Honor Code. Outside of USG, I serve as a Peer Representative, am on the board of Community House, and am a member of the Sailing Team.

Please feel free to reach out to me about absolutely anything at [abattar@princeton.edu](mailto:abattar@princeton.edu).

c. Chief of Staff - Dillion Gallagher '23

- i. Hi everyone! My name is Dillion Gallagher, which is spelled like million but pronounced like the gym here on campus. I am concentrating in the School of Public and International Affairs and hope to earn certificates in East Asian Studies and Statistics and Machine Learning. I work every week at the University Writing Center, and I am an opinion columnist for the Daily Princetonian. I am also a member of the social entrepreneurship team of the E-club. I am so proud to serve as Chief of Staff to the President and Vice President. In this new role, I will commit myself both to the daily service of my classmates and finding opportunities for helpful, systemic change for the Princeton community. Our Princeton experience should be powerful, challenging, exciting, and profound, and I will work to make that true for each member of our community. If you have any book or movie recommendations, good places to eat around town, or just want to complain to someone, feel free to reach out to me at [dilliong@princeton.edu](mailto:dilliong@princeton.edu).

d. Parliamentarian - Kate Liu '23

- i. I'm a junior from New Jersey concentrating in Philosophy with a certificate in Values & Public Life. As Parliamentarian, I advise the senate on Constitutional matters and interpret governing documents. During election cycles, I advise the Chief Elections Manager in establishing elections timelines and reviewing referenda. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about the Constitution or any rules governing the Senate!

e. Executive Secretary - Charlotte Selover '25

- i. Hi! My name is Charlotte Selover and I'm a first year from Cape May, New Jersey. I'm so excited to serve as the Executive Secretary! I'm planning on concentrating in chemistry with potential certificates in Sustainable Energy or Environmental Studies. In addition to USG, I am a member of the Princeton Conservation Society and Club Softball.

f. DEI Chair - Braiden Aaronson '25

- i. Heyo! I'm Braiden (he/they), and I am super excited to serve as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair for USG. I was born in Arizona and raised in Texas, and I am undecided for my concentration (probably Economics, SPIA, or Politics) with certificates in Stats & Machine Learning and Values & Public Life. I love music, so you can see me around campus in the Glee Club or attempting to learn to play the acoustic guitar. This term I am hoping to help integrate DEI efforts into the USG and greater Princeton culture by elevating every student's voice, especially students that are part of affinity groups and historically marginalized communities. I am here to represent you, so please reach out and let me know

what you would like to see from USG surrounding DEI at  
braiden.aaronson@princeton.edu!

- g. Director of Communications - Sarah Sharma '25
  - i. Hi Tigers! My name is Sarah Sharma and I am excited to be serving as the Director of Communications for USG. As Director of Communications I hope to augment candid community connection by listening to student voices, and disputing misinformation. I'd also like to incorporate technological innovation into USG Communications. I am a freshman majoring in SPIA with certificates in finance, entrepreneurship and classics. Outside of USG I love to research, read and travel. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions in regards to USG, I am the one to contact! I am available anytime at ss89@princeton.edu.
- h. U Councilor - Carlisle Imperial '25
  - i. Hi all! My name is Carlisle Imperial and I am excited to serve as one of your U-Councilors this year. I am planning to concentrate in Politics with certificates in Spanish and Linguistics. Outside of USG, I am in the Navy ROTC program and enjoy playing board games, reading, and spending time with friends. This year I will focus on mitigating the pandemic's impact on social and academic life and facilitating difficult conversations across differences. I am very open to suggestions, so please email me (cimperial@princeton.edu) if there is anything that you would like to share with me.
- i. Historian - Caitlin McNally '24
  - i. Hi! My name is Caitlin and I am serving my second year as Historian! I am beyond excited to continue working with USG as I believe that it is a great group of motivated students who are focused on positive change. Outside of USG, I am also involved in Women's Club Soccer, Alexander Hamilton Society, Campus Rec, and SIFP! I am a prospective SPIA student and hope to obtain a certificate in Values and Public Life.



**REPORT OF THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ON  
MIDTERM FEEDBACK**

*PREPARED IN RESPONSE TO WINTER 2021 MIDTERM GRADING REFERENDUM*

January 2022

**Referendum Response Team Members:**

Academics Chair Austin Davis '23  
Sustainability Chair Mayu Takeuchi '23  
Website Manager Ceon Sun '23  
U-Councilor Anna Sivaraj '23  
U-Councilor Stephen Daniels '24  
Parliamentarian Kate Liu '23

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## Sec. I. Executive Summary

In the Winter 2021 Undergraduate Student Government (USG) elections, USG Academics Committee Chair Austin Davis '23 sponsored Referendum Question No. 1 calling for the Office of the Dean of the College and the faculty to require instructors of all undergraduate courses to provide relevant midterm grades, or comments in certain circumstances.<sup>1</sup> This policy change would better inform students of their academic progress and aid their planning for the second half of the semester.

The referendum passed with 89 percent of votes in support (2,073 out of 2,329 total votes), 4 percent of votes in opposition, and 7 percent of voters abstaining. Voter turnout was 45 percent. In addition, the proposal was endorsed by the *Daily Princetonian* Editorial Board and both candidates for USG President in the Winter 2021 election.<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming support for this measure indicates the importance of this feedback to the student body. Given this, the USG supports this proposal. This paper provides further details on the benefits and rationale behind these policy changes, the recommendations presented in the referendum, and suggested action items to implement a universal midterm grade reporting policy.

## Sec. II. Background

Currently, the Office of the Dean of the College mandates that instructors of 100- and 200-level courses report midterm grades by the Monday after the midterm break period.<sup>3</sup> Designed to help inform students' academic planning for the remainder of the given semester, this policy offers students the requisite information to readjust studying strategies; consult University academic advisors and resources; speak with their instructors about their academic performance, course expectations, and course grading; and/or elect a Pass/D/Fail option, among others.

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<sup>1</sup> These "certain circumstances" would be limited to instances where the instructor opts for a "N" ("no-grade") designation. In all scenarios, instructors should be encouraged to leave comments even if they give a letter grade.

<sup>2</sup> The Daily Princetonian Editorial Board, "Vote for Takeuchi, yes on midterm grading referendum," *The Daily Princetonian*, December 7, 2021, <https://www.dailyprincetonian.com/article/2021/12/princeton-student-government-usg-elections-referendum-editorial-board>; Aidan Iacobucci, "Jasman Singh '23, Mayu Takeuchi '23 participate in USG Presidential Debate," *The Daily Princetonian*, December 6, 2021, <https://www.dailyprincetonian.com/article/2021/12/princeton-usg-presidential-debate-2021-2022>.

<sup>3</sup> "Conduct of Courses," Office of the Registrar, last updated August 12, 2021, <https://registrar.princeton.edu/faculty-and-department-resources/examinations-and-grading/conduct-courses>, accessed September 30, 2021.

This policy has two primary shortcomings. First, it does not cover students who take 300- and 400-level courses. Second, many instructors choose to elect the “N” (“no grade”) designation, even in situations where they are mandated to input a grade. Thus, many undergraduate students do not have access to important academic information to help inform their decisions in the second half of the semester.

Enacting academic policy changes that amend these problems would serve to the benefit of the student body without substantially changing the workload of the faculty. In fact, these changes are aligned with existing recommendations from the Dean of the College to faculty on assignments and grading; namely, to “grade early and often” and to space out assignments throughout the semester.<sup>4</sup> It would also encourage broader dialogues about teaching and learning, grading, student performance, and course expectations.

Among peer institutions, Yale University requires all instructors to provide students with written midterm feedback on their academic progress. The Yale College Course of Study Committee encourages instructors to return this feedback to students no later than the end of week seven of the semester.<sup>5</sup> According to the Yale University Handbook for Instructors of Undergraduates, “the purpose of this policy is to allow students to have some measure of their standing in a course and of their mastery of its materials.”<sup>6</sup> This feedback process complements recommendations by Yale College for instructors to offer graded assignments throughout the semester in addition to end-of-term assessments.

Other peer institutions have established processes for providing feedback to inform students of their academic performance and progress across a wide range of courses. For example, Brown University has institutionalized Course Performance Reports (CPRs), with which students may request instructors to provide written evaluations of their performance in courses.<sup>7</sup> Students may request CPRs at any point in the term, including at the middle of the term. At Brown University, instructors are required to honor these requests in mandatory satisfactory / no credit (S/NC) courses, comparable to P/D/F only courses at Princeton. Other

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<sup>4</sup> Jill S. Dolan to the faculty, “Fall semester teaching and learning,” August 12, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> “Handbook for Instructors of Undergraduates in Yale College 2021-2022,” <http://catalog.yale.edu/handbook-instructors-undergraduates-yale-college/grades/midterm-feedback-courses/>, accessed January 19, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> “Handbook for Instructors.”

<sup>7</sup> “Support for Faculty & Advisors,” <https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/support/faculty/grades>, accessed January 19, 2022.

universities, such as Harvard and Vanderbilt, have mandates for instructors to report unsatisfactory progress during the term.<sup>8</sup>

Institutionalized processes for providing midterm grades and feedback allow students to engage meaningfully and rigorously with their academic coursework. They encourage dialogue between students and instructors about course expectations and grading. They also offer students the opportunity to evaluate their learning strategies and continue to hone their academic skills, interests, and expertise.

### **Sec. III. Referendum**

The undergraduates call on the faculty and Office of the Dean of the College to:

1. Implement a universal midterm grade reporting policy that is extended to all undergraduate courses at the University.
2. Create a new TigerHub functionality that allows instructors to leave comments to explain or supplement a student's midterm grade.
3. Prohibit instructors from leaving an "N" designation without also having to leave a comment describing a student's academic performance.

### **Sec. IV. Next Steps and Recommendations**

Acknowledging the importance to students of having accurate, timely, and relevant feedback after the midterm period to inform academic progress, the USG recommends the Office of the Dean of the College pursue the following action items:

1. The USG Academics Committee holds a focus group between itself and members of the faculty to raise awareness of the proposal ahead of a faculty vote, in addition to hearing any concerns that faculty might have.
2. Members of the Committee on Examinations & Standing approve the changes detailed in the referendum to the University grading policy, forwarding them to the faculty for ratification.

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<sup>8</sup> "Due Dates for Grades," <https://infoforfaculty.fas.harvard.edu/book/due-dates-grades>, accessed January 19, 2022; "Entering Mid Term Deficiencies," <https://registrar.vanderbilt.edu/documents/YES-User-Guide-Entering-Mid-term-Deficiencies1.pdf>, accessed January 19, 2022.



3. The Registrar, the Office of Information Technology (OIT), faculty, and students form a working group to oversee the design and implementation of a commenting functionality on TigerHub.

### **Sec. V. Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to thank members of the USG Academics Committee for their prior work in advocating for universal midterm feedback.