

**From:** homewoodac

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 17, 2016 3:37 PM

**To:** 'recoverhopkins@gmail.com'

**Subject:** Sent on behalf of Professor Ginsberg, Secretary, Homewood Academic Council

***Sent on behalf of Benjamin Ginsberg, David Bernstein Professor of Political Science, Secretary, Homewood Academic Council***

Dear Students of the #ReCoverHopkins Coalition,

On behalf of the Homewood Academic Council, thank you for your messages about the decision to end covered grades in fall 2017. You have raised issues regarding the process through which this decision was reached; we are pleased to provide some additional background.

As you know, the Homewood Academic Council, which is responsible for establishing academic policies for the Krieger and Whiting schools on behalf of the faculty, voted to end the covered grades policy in 2011. The core rationales behind the decision included ensuring students would develop strong study habits from their earliest days on campus and demonstrate preparedness for higher-level courses, particularly in the case of sequential courses. The council also sought to eliminate the negative effects high-achieving students or those applying for scholarships, graduate schools, or other academic pursuits might experience due to covered grades and to ensure students were receiving the academic support needed to select appropriate courses and thrive within them. We were concerned that the transition to university was being unnecessarily prolonged by the adoption of this practice, and that we were hobbled in our capacity to assist students early on who were in need of support.

The council's decision followed years of discussions with various constituencies on and off campus, including students enrolled as undergraduates at that time.

From 2008 to 2009, undergraduate representatives, including the senior class president, served on a committee assembled by the Academic Council to assess the covered grades policy.

The committee's deliberations included a survey of all Homewood faculty, students, and alumni, to which nearly 2,000 undergraduates replied, a white paper on covered grades by the then-vice provost and dean of undergraduate education (KSAS) and the vice dean for education (WSE), and a statistical analysis comparing students' academic performance in their first and subsequent semesters.

Following the Academic Council's 2011 vote to end covered grades, we recognize that students continued to engage in active debates around the decision.

Since the 2011 vote, the Academic Council has continued to advocate for its implementation. During that time, it is clear we did not account for the fact that most undergraduate students on our campus today were not part of the extensive debate between 2008 and 2012; more should have been done to alert you to the pending change.

We remain committed to working closely with students and other members of the university community. Specifically, the Academic Council welcomes the opportunity to meet with students at an upcoming council meeting to talk through the process through which it reached this decision and the rationale for our decision, and to seek input on any accompanying policies that should be put in place to address student concerns. We also commit to making that decision process

transparent. Although the council did not release reports or internal records at the time of the decision, we believe it is important for the Johns Hopkins community to understand how the Academic Council came to the policy change. We are working to gather historical documents and to prepare a brief chronology of past discussions, which we will post on the Academic Council website.

We appreciate the commitment with which the #ReCoverHopkins coalition has approached this effort on behalf of future Johns Hopkins students, and look forward to continuing this conversation.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Ginsberg  
David Bernstein Professor of Political Science  
Secretary, Homewood Academic Council