At present, when students move from one undergraduate school of NYU to another, they retain a single transcript that lists all of the courses they took at NYU. But the grades in the courses from the different schools are not all treated the same in the computation of the GPA. In some cases, only the grades in courses taken while matriculated in the current (or latest) school, plus those in courses given by that school while matriculated in a prior school, are included in the cumulative GPA. In other cases, courses from certain schools are counted, while courses from other schools are not. The same course can count in the GPA if taken while matriculated in the current school but not if taken while matriculated in another school. The current policy, with all its local variations, can at times appear opaque, operationally complex, and disrespectful to students and faculty colleagues alike.

This policy dates back to the era when all NYU transcripts were created by hand and when a transfer from one school to another resulted in a new transcript, which listed first the courses the student took in the new school while matriculated in the former school (all other courses were listed as generic transfer credit, in a section along with AP credit and transfer credit from other institutions, with no indication of grades). The calculation of the GPA was also a manual operation and considered only grades listed on the current transcript.

The policy has led to transcripts that look strange and baffling, especially to outsiders. The transcript may indicate, for example, that in an early semester the student earned 16 credits but had a term GPA of 0.000. In addition, under each course title one finds the note “Not included in GPA.” The Registrar’s Office has often been asked by outsiders to explain such apparent anomalies on transcripts.

The policy affects a large number of students: in the fall of 2007, 723 students moved from one NYU school to another. The great majority (499) of these were students in the General Studies Program (GSP) moving on to one of six different four-year schools. But all of the four-year schools had some students transferring to a different four-year program.

At a time when schools are being asked to review their policies and procedures “to ensure that they impose no undue barriers to cross-school registration” (Midwest States Association Self-Study recommendation), when the number of cross-school minors is growing, and when grades in courses at NYU sites abroad or at exchange institutions are included in the GPA, it seems appropriate to reconsider this longstanding policy. This topic was first discussed in the UAAC in January 2007, in the context of GSP’s greater integration into the University; it again came up at the UAAC in January 2008, and the group expressed considerable support for a single undergraduate GPA. The University
Registrar has since then indicated that he and his senior staff would welcome such a new policy.

We recommend the adoption of a policy that treats all courses in all schools equally, no matter when taken, in the calculation of the undergraduate GPA. This “University” GPA should serve, for example, as the basis for the determination of Latin honors. Since for some other purposes (e.g., school-specific or discipline-specific awards) schools may prefer to use a school-based GPA, we recommend that the transcript also show such a GPA. Individual schools would then decide what courses their GPA should include.

For the longer term, we suggest that the University community undertake a broader consideration of grading disparities and guidelines.