

# Faculty Inquiry Group Final Report: *Ungrading & Other Alternative Grading Practices*

Prepared by Rachel Knighten with contributions by FIG participants

## FIG Participants:

Karin Almquist (French), Aryn Bartley (English), Stacey Christian (Spanish), Rachel Knighten (Spanish), Ingrid Nordstrom (English), Beth Sheppard (Chinuk Wawa), Michael Woods (Spanish)

## Meeting Dates:

### [Spreadsheet](#)

November 5, 2021  
November 19, 2021  
December 3, 2021  
January 28, 2022  
February 11, 2022  
February 25, 2022

## Overview:

Our group met a total of six times to discuss *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)*, a collection of essays edited by Susan D. Blum. Our conversations included references to podcasts and articles related to the topic. Members of our group will host a discussion during the second annual CTL Symposium later this month. When we began our inquiry, we were motivated by overlapping concerns and priorities: fostering student success, defining success, and supporting students as whole people. Tackling this book seemed especially timely as the stressors experienced by learners and teachers were brought to the forefront during the past two years of pandemic education with the multiple shifts that have occurred, often with little warning or support. In our discussions, we found that the essays in the book provided a framework to understand and articulate what each of us had been doing in our own classes. We each found that, in some way, we were already applying elements of "ungrading" in our own courses. Although we didn't necessarily encounter new ideas to apply to our own classes, we found support and validation for our practices, and encouragement to continue our work to motivate and encourage our students' learning.

## Participants comments

What did you find helpful? Will you be making any changes to your current practices after participating in this FIG?

I found that the sum total of the ungrading essays showed something important about simplicity and complexity in grading systems. I want to keep things simple and clear so my students can focus on the material they're studying. Several of the essays were inspiring in this regard. But the best part of the FIG was conversing with my colleagues, learning how they see grading and what they do in their classes. -Beth Sheppard

I participated in two FIGs, both focused on grading, and found that the ideas and discussions in both overlapped in useful ways. One aspect of our conversations that I found particularly useful was that I was forced to think about how I learned to grade, how I developed certain ideas about grading and the value of grades for students and for my class. This FIG gave me space to rethink some of the ideas that I considered "truths" but were really just norms that need to be questioned and revised. I particularly enjoyed having the opportunity to talk with faculty outside of Writing & Literature; while there are certainly overlaps in the way we approach our courses, the assignments and approaches to grading can be quite different. It's always valuable to hear how others do the work of grading, and it's also always inspiring to be surrounded by a group of instructors who are so passionate about and committed to their students. -Ingrid Nordstrom

While I was unable to attend all the group's sessions, I found our conversations to be enlightening and inspiring. It was wonderful to be in a group of people who care so deeply about helping their students succeed. The book itself offered up new possibilities and practical suggestions for rethinking grading that dovetailed in many ways with other materials I have been reading over the past year as well as some of the practices I have recently been implementing in my own courses. I appreciated its radical approach to making grading practices more equitable and inclusive. - Aryn Bartley