

The Grading Conference is an annual, virtual conference dedicated to promoting effective grading practices that improve student learning and success, providing a communal space for practitioners to gather and share expertise and information, and broadening and deepening the impact of alternative grading across the educational spectrum.

The Grading Conference grant from the National Science Foundation was a one-year \$50,000 grant. The goal of the grant was to expand the impact of alternative grading practices as widely as possible within higher education STEM faculty as well as provide infrastructure and build professional learning communities to support this goal.

The NSF grant (award 2304776) was awarded to a team from California State University Los Angeles who, in partnership with higher education STEM faculty from around the country, organized the 2023 and 2024 Grading Conferences. With support from the grant, the organizing committee of the conference was able to expand the attendance at the conference with >50% year-over-year growth in attendance in both 2023 and 2024. Year over year growth was also seen in the duration of the conference, increasing from 2 days in 2023 to 3 days in 2024, and the number of presentations, increasing from approximately 25 presentations in 2023 to over 50 in 2024. Additionally, support from the grant enabled the creation and support of institutional level registrations to allow teams from institutions to attend the conference for a single payment and significant discount over individual registration fees.

Sessions at the Grading Conference inform and educate attendees about alternative grading practices that are designed to:

- Avoid the serious flaws present in traditional points-and-percentages grading systems
- Accurately measure and communicate student learning
- Facilitate student growth and learning through alignment with key neuroscience related learning principles
- Improve STEM engagement and outcomes in higher education undergraduate students

The conference provides tools and opportunities for attendees to implement alternative grading systems in their classrooms. From practical advice to research results, the talks and workshops available promote these effective grading practices and support faculty in their adoption. Additionally, faculty who have adopted alternative grading practices or do research on their effectiveness have a place to present their lessons learned and research findings.

Beyond the increased awareness of the damage done by traditional points-based grading to student learning, student motivation, and the student-teacher relationship, effective implementation by a wider group of faculty in a variety of teaching environments has highlighted the impact of alternative grading, especially when combined with effective pedagogical practices such as inquiry based learning, active learning, and flipped learning. The exponential impact of leveraging effective pedagogical practices with effective grading practices has shown significant increases in student engagement and learning in the numerous classroom implementations shared at the conference.

During the grant period, a new non-profit organization, the Center for Grading Reform, was formed to continue and expand upon the work of the Grading Conference and is now the host of the Grading Conference. The Grading Conference continues beyond the end of the grant with plans for growth to include supporting collaborative research projects, supporting centers for excellence in teaching, and developing and providing professional development opportunities around implementing effective grading practices. For more information, visit www.centerforgradingreform.org.