

FEEDBACK AS OF 4/9/07 FROM DEPARTMENT CHAIRS ON GRADE INFLATION

General Data on the Process to Date

25 department chairs were invited to reply, receive, run, and comment on results from the query.
11 department chairs, so far, have agreed to participate.
6 department chairs, so far, have completed the process and sent their responses.

QUESTION #1: Do you or others in your department believe grade inflation is a problem?

All 6 replied, "Yes," to this question. All were concerned about inflation, while one said grades had actually deflated over the years/terms covered by the query (fall '92, '96, '00, '04).

QUESTION #2: If so, why?

The range of answers to this question included: grade inflation makes grades less meaningful, students lose incentives to achieve more, end users of transcripts (employers, graduate program admissions offices, etc.) have difficulty using grades as a basis for their evaluations, enrollments are skewed (some students flock to easier graders), faculty receive more pressure from students to lower their standards, etc.

QUESTION #3: If not, why not?

All agreed grade inflation is a problem, so none answered this question.

QUESTION #4: If you do believe grade inflation is a problem, what suggestions do you have for departmental and/or university-wide approaches to curbing grade inflation?

The range of answers to this question included: normalize transcripts to show an average class GPA as a context for understanding individual grades, provide assistance to departments to track grading trends over time, create grade reports for every class compared to other classes on an annual basis for 10 years, reward faculty for maintaining standards, avoid punishing faculty who receive lower student evaluations because they grade harder. One department chair commented that publicizing course grade averages did not influence grading behaviors of faculty members within that department and, therefore, that the University would need to go beyond the department unit to effectively address the issue. Another department chair commented that instituting department-wide grading standards appeared to have the effect of lowering the average GPA's given in courses which historically had been viewed as easy while raising GPA's in courses which historically had been viewed as difficult.

QUESTION #5: What kinds of information on grading trends within your department might you like a revised Student Data Warehouse query to generate?

Although not every respondent answered this question, responses included: "Grades broken down by course and by faculty member, percentage of As, Bs, I would like to be able to look at data broken down by GTF instructors, adjuncts, as well as by regular faculty members,".... "The grade report is actually very useful, although I would rather see it for every individual class, i.e. by CRN number, by level of course....I actually think it is helpful to faculty to see how the grades they assign in their class stack up to other persons in the department teaching a similar level of course."