

RESPONSES TO GRADE INFLATION REPORT

UNIVERSITY SENATE

5/10/06

The University Senate raised several questions following the presentation of the report:

Is there a correlation between the frequency of "As" and kinds of instructors(e.g. rank; tenure-track or not)?? Didn't see this addressed in the report

Is there a correlation between grades and student evaluations?

How can we re-socialize students? This needs to happen. There need to be workshops on grades and expectations.

There needs to be a recognition that grade distribution may mean different things at different levels:

50% "A"s in 1st year Spanish would be surprising, but 50% "A"s in a 400-level course would be reasonable.

Demographics play a role in grading: the percentage of girls enrolled in higher education is higher than boys, and girls get higher grades.

ASUO Senate Meeting- May 3, 2006

In general, members of the student senate thought grade inflation was problematic and should be addressed. They expressed the following opinions:

- Reducing grade inflation could have a positive effect on UO by raising the stature of the institution and the value of grades earned here.
- If the UO engages in an effort to reduce grade inflation, the University should make it widely known and explain this on each transcript.
- Grade inflation is symptomatic of a "cultural problem" - pressure to demonstrate outstanding performance.
- Professors need to learn how to stand up to pressure from students. Some professors are overwhelmed by the vigorous efforts on the part of students to have their grade raised.
- The report indicates that the University doesn't intend to try to figure out the cause of grade inflation. Determining the cause is important and should be done.

**CAS Department Chairs Meeting
April 10, 2006**

Comments from Department Heads:

Was gender break-down in grading analyzed? Female students earn higher grades than males with matched SAT scores

Non-tenured instructors and small programs receive more pressure to give high grades

Department-level data for departmental discussion is needed; “A+” data should be looked analyzed.

Grades have been increasing for a long time, not just in the interval examined in the UGC Grade Inflation Report.

Summer Session grades should be examined, as well.

If Grade Inflation is a national trend, can we really do anything??

Advising will be impacted by any change in practice; grading and mentoring don't go together. If there is a new grading system, then we need better departmental advising to foster good relationships with students.

Is there any analysis of SAT score reliability ?? – maybe students really are better!
Could Grade Inflation occur because the quality of teaching has improved?

All CAS department chairs concurred that it is important to get individual department data for the current discussion.

One chair noted that Law schools have required grade distributions (national requirement).

Dept of Psychology-

In response to the document from the Undergraduate Council about grade inflation...

Is there data on the relationship between grade inflation and the A+=4.3 practice? The potential for an honorary A+ would also communicate a kind of dignity in grading and respect for students.

The most powerful intervention is making information more transparent and available to instructors. One doesn't know they are out of line if they don't have information about the line.

It would also help a lot to have some policy or recommendations that can be conveyed directly to students, as the students so often exert pressure on instructors.

Subsequently, the Psychology Dept. analyzed grading patterns within their own department and, from this process, developed a set of internal grading policies. Policies were based on the current UO definitions for grades:

A= Excellent

B= Good

C=Satisfactory

D=Inferior

F= Unsatisfactory (no credit given)

The department adopted the following guidelines for grade distributions for A's and B's:

200-level courses

A's -- about 23%

B's -- about 35%

300- and 400-level courses

A's -- about 27%

B's -- about 37%

The policies also state that “The awarding of excess percentage of A+s is of particular concern. A+ should be reserved for performance that is outstanding.”

The Dept. decided to give each instructor individual feedback to begin with rather than publishing all individual data throughout the Dept. They are currently working with the Registrar's Office and with their own internal data resources to develop a desired form of reporting data. The data generated internally for the report taxed their departmental resources.

REGISTRAR'S OFFICE (Conversations with Jim Blick)

Jim Blick compiles a Banner list including grade distributions for each CRN within each department. At the request of a department representative, he can supply that data to the department. In this scenario, departments would need to put faculty names together with CRN's, then copy, paste, and send the relevant info to each faculty member individually (in the Psychology Dept's model).

The Registrar's Office is also willing to help an appropriate banner user within any department write a dept. specific query to collect their own data benchmarked against departmental norms at the end of each term.

The Registrar's Office has also discussed the possibility of creating a Banner report for each department with grade distributions, names and other relevant data. That could be a future project.

