

Summary of Undergraduate Council discussion of UO grade culture, 2009-10

Study of grade inflation (2006)

- Sample of regularly offered UO courses in a range of disciplines and levels, 1992-2004
- Percentage of As went up 10%, percentage of As + Bs went up 7%
- Average UO GPA went up by 5%
- Average high school GPA also went up by 5%
- SAT-M rose only slightly, SAT-V not at all
- UO comparable to other flagship state universities

Other problems with grade culture

- Compression at the top
- Discrepancies across departments
- Migration from “hard” to “easy” classes & majors
- “Grade grubbing” and anxiety over GPAs
- General loss of meaning
- Increased reliance on standardized testing, “assessment rubrics”

UGC guiding principles

- Respect instructors’ freedom and disciplinary differences
- Do not put the students at a disadvantage
- First act locally to improve the culture, then consider contacts beyond UO
- Provide information and start conversations rather than dictate deflationary solutions

Proposals

- **#1: Discipline-specific grading standards**
- **#2: Comparative statistics for instructors**
- **#3: Contextual information on transcripts (e.g. %As)**

Feedback

- UO leadership
- Departments
- ASUO Senate
- Blog (<http://gradeculture.uoregon.edu>), email address (ugcproposals@uoregon.edu)
- Digest of confidential emails to Senate President
- Town halls

Sample issues raised so far

- UO should not “deflate” unilaterally
- Generate statistical comparisons *across* departments
- GTFs pressured, overworked, inconsistent, untrained
- Faculty (especially new faculty) grade in a vacuum
- Lax/inconsistent use of the A+
- Contextual information will hurt students, make inflation worse
- Recommend university-wide targets for Gen Ed courses
- Grades are an obstacle to true learning and knowledge