

Grade Expectations

(Draft, April 8, 2009 for first reading in the Faculty Senate April 10)

The Academic Planning Committee of the DU Faculty Senate has studied the issue of grades and what is sometimes deceptively called grade inflation for the last year. There is no denying college and university undergraduate grade point averages (GPAs) have risen steadily over the last four decades (and, for that matter, over the last century). GPAs have increased more at private colleges and universities than they have at public institutions. Different departments have seen greater increases (the humanities) and smaller increases (the sciences). Janette Benson spoke to our committee in the spring of 2008 on this subject:

The reasons for grade inflation are social and generational, as well as structural. This last has to do with the increasing numbers of adjunct faculty in universities, and government intrusions, in a sense—students with Hope Scholarships have to maintain a B- average, for example. The correlation between student evaluations of faculty and grade inflation is difficult to pin down. Empirically, there is no relationship between faculty who give a wider spread of grades and lower evaluations from students. Going back to the Vietnam War, male students were often given better grades in order for them to maintain their student deferments.

In

(November 8, 2002), Alfie Kohn

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Appendix

Here are two examples of other colleges' GPA averages since 1978:

Carleton College

1978	3.05
1979	3.04
1980	3.09
1981	3.13
1982	3.12
1983	3.09
1984	3.10
1985	3.14
1986	3.14
1987	3.15