



THE PENDULUM

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'A' is for 'Average'

High number of A's increases average student GPA, could lead to more rigorous teaching

Sam Parker
Senior Reporter

Following the recent trend in distinguished grades at Elon University, 25 percent of grades given during the fall 2010 semester were A's while 12.8 percent were B's, bringing the standard GPA to 3.17.

Steven House, provost and vice president for academic affairs, said his worries are more centered on the rise of A's and B's among students rather than the increased GPA.

"The average grade percentage being 3.17 doesn't really bother me at all," House said. "What bothers me is the percentage of A's. If you look at our catalog, it says the A is reserved for distinguished performance, and when a quarter of the students are getting a distinguished performance, it raises the question of how distinguished an A really is. It seems that faculty are doing a disservice to their very good students that are really doing distinguished work."

Peter Felten, assistant Provost and director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, said he believes an issue lies in the understanding of what grading is about and what its purposes serve.

"I think we don't have a common understanding of what grades are for," Felten said. "Within the same department, there are some instances where there are two faculty teaching the same course to the same number of students, but each have very different grading methods. One may be curved, while the other is criterion-based, and to me, that doesn't seem entirely fair. I think it would be helpful if faculty within the same department agreed on what grades are actually for."

House said he and faculty have pondered several reasons for the grade increases in order to better understand how to address the issue.

"There are a number of reasons that people use to explain why grades

are going up," he said. "One, students are smarter and faculty are better teachers. Faculty teach differently than they used to, i.e. they used to say, 'Hand in your paper, I'm going to grade it, and that's your grade.' Now, I give it back to you with some suggestions so it's more back and forth, back and forth."

In response to the suggestions, House said the administration has advised faculty to execute more rigorous academic teaching and supply thoroughly descriptive rubrics.

"I think this is a faculty-led initiative," he said. "They're the ones who are going to have to be responsible for making sure they give rigorous exams with appropriate grading to give good feedback to students and recognize them for the work they're earning. That being said, my job will be to back them up, and right now, I think the best way to address this issue is to be transparent with the information."

As the university executes policies pertaining to minimum GPAs, both Glenda Crawford, director of the Teaching Fellows, and Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler, director of the Honors program, agreed students feel pressure to earn A's and B's to remain in good standing within academic programs. They also said students' tensions should not place pressures on faculty to easily hand over higher grades.

"The requirements of the (Honors Fellows) program make it incumbent on the students to achieve and are not intended to put any pressure on faculty assigning grades," Vandermaas-Peeler said. "A combination of hard work, ability and intellectual curiosity enabled students to gain admittance into the program, and we expect these qualities to be enhanced in college."

Crawford said she believes it

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What are you waiting for? NEON TREES scheduled to perform at Elon

Lauren Ramsdell
Arts and Entertainment Editor

Students are already chomping at the bit to learn who the artists for this year's popular Spring Show are going to be.

Unfortunately, the announcement is still weeks away. The Student Union Board promises a reveal event like no other during the Feb. 5 men's

basketball game versus Appalachian State University.

There is limited information surrounding who the opening and main acts will be, and only certain people within SUB know the full details. But, Neon Trees, an electric rock quartet from Provo, Utah, has announced on its Facebook page and in its band's website a 2011 tour stop at Elon University.

Neon Trees was a contender in the Spring Show survey released this fall for an opening act slot for a still-unknown featured performer. The stop is on Friday, May 5, the same day as the Spring Show.

SUB President My Nguyen and adviser Bobby Dunlap, assistant director of student activities, both said the organization cannot comment on the bands selected for the Spring

Show because of technical and legal reasons.

"The official word from SUB is that we will give no comment regarding the actual artist or artists until the day of the Spring Show Reveal," Nguyen said in an e-mail exchange.

But for Neon Trees fans, regardless if the band is coming for the Spring Show or not, a stop in Elon on the tour is more than enough.

