

## INFLATION

from page 3

Liston is not alone. Junior Delaney McHugo also sees a problem with grades at Elon.

"I think that a lot of the caliber of work that students do here is not necessarily matching up to the standards of grades," she said. "Yet professors feel obligated to give students those grades for various reasons."

The university has made efforts to combat grade inflation. One of the school's mottos is "Engaged Learning," which aims to expand a student's knowledge outside the classroom. Students are studying abroad, listening to guest speakers and engaging in extracurricular activities. Even with these initiatives, students like Liston don't think that makes up for the lack of academic rigor.

"I think Elon has made significant strides, and I don't want to discredit them, but my high school was harder than what I'm doing now," Liston said.

Dr. Steven House, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, recognizes the abnormally high amount of A's and is concerned.

"[The high number of A's] does a disservice to the ones that really, truly do have a distinguished performance," he said. "They are trying to set themselves apart to be the ones to go to graduate school."

### Why so many A's?

One of the possible reasons for grade inflation is that professors purposely inflate grades to boost their performance on student evaluations, and Dr. House recognizes this as a possibility.

"I do believe that there is a perception with faculty that if I grade easier I will get a better student evaluation," he said. "But I know that that is not always the case because some of our toughest graders are our most highest-rated faculty."

Yet, the university's toughest graders are definitely in the minority, especially with more than 70 percent of the grades falling between the A and B range.

Business professor Scott Buechler believes one reason for grade inflation is actually smarter students.

"Academic rigor I think has gone up, but I also think that the quality of students has outpaced the increase in academic rigor," he said.

There is no doubt that Elon's academic reputation has increased. In 2005, the average GPA for an incoming freshman was 3.72. Today, the average GPA for an incoming freshman is a 3.9. Perhaps the curriculum has not adjusted enough to the improved quality of students.

Nonetheless, McHugo said she believes the university will be hesitant to adjust the

Elon University					
Fall Term					
Academic Year	A's	B's	C's	D's	F's
1992-93	24%	33%	22%	7%	4%
1993-94	24%	34%	21%	6%	4%
1994-95	25%	35%	19%	5%	3%
1995-96	26%	35%	19%	5%	3%
1996-97	28%	34%	18%	5%	3%
1997-98	29%	35%	17%	4%	2%
1998-99	29%	35%	16%	4%	2%
1999-00	30%	35%	16%	4%	2%
2000-01	33%	35%	13%	3%	2%
2001-02	34%	35%	14%	3%	2%
2002-03	34%	35%	13%	3%	2%
2003-04	34%	36%	13%	3%	1%
2004-05	36%	36%	12%	2%	2%
2005-06	38%	35%	12%	2%	1%
2006-07	37%	36%	11%	2%	2%
2007-08	39%	36%	11%	2%	1%
2008-09	40%	36%	10%	2%	1%
2009-10	40%	35%	9%	2%	1%
2010-11	41%	34%	10%	2%	1%
2011-12	42%	34%	9%	2%	1%

Elon's grade distribution from 1992-2012.

COURTESY OF THE 2012-2013 ELON UNIVERSITY FACTBOOK

curriculum.

"It's something we are kind of sweeping under the rug to kind of keep our overall image of having this intellectual climate, because people are getting good grades, and people are doing well in their classes, and that looks great," she said.

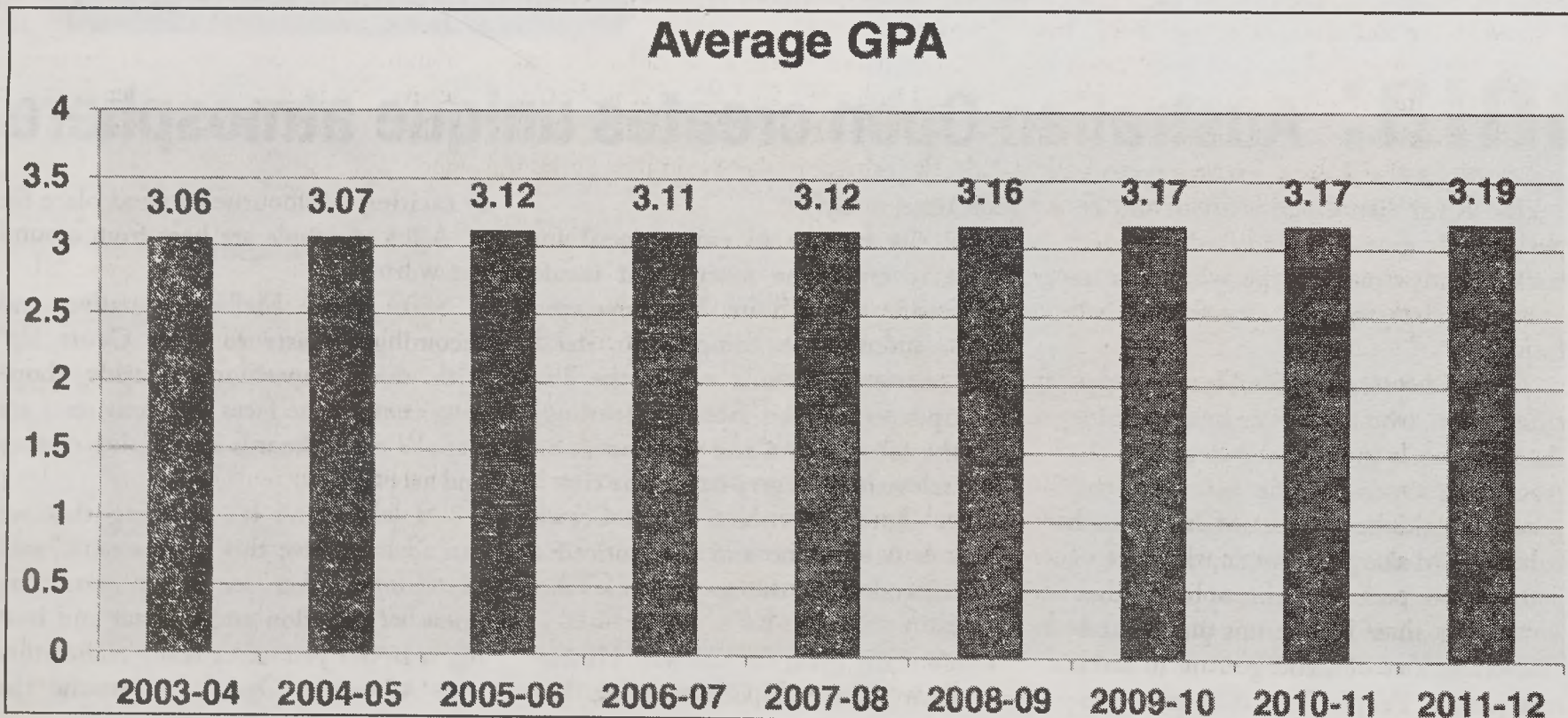
### How can we fix it?

Grade inflation isn't a problem at Elon. It's an issue on a national scale. A recent Teachers College Record study that across a range of 200 universities, more than 40 percent of all grades awarded in the A range. For Elon to address the inflation issue, it would require action from the administration, teachers and students. The administration would need to enforce stricter grading standards, would need to ensure the grade fits the standard, and students would need to do more than the bare minimum.

"I just think that we do whatever it takes to pass by, and we're paying thousands of dollars to go to this institution so it challenges us academically first and foremost," McHugo said.

The administration isn't opposing changing the system, but students need to come forward if there is a problem.

"I wish students would, in their own perceptions of teaching, indicate when they are unhappy," Dr. House said. "Say, 'I got an A in this class, but I was disappointed in the way things were graded.' Those are the kinds of things that will get things changed."



The average GPA of Elon students from 2003-2012.

COURTESY OF THE 2012-2013 ELON UNIVERSITY FACTBOOK