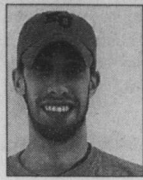


Fuzzy Math? The Myth of Grade Inflation Exposed

A university that is in its 213th year, traditions are innumerable and revered. And it seems as if a new custom has joined the ranks of the Old Well and the Davie Poplar. For the past two years, the end of each semester has been greeted with reports of the most detrimental development since Gen. Sherman found a Zippo and a map to Savannah. The trend that has all of academia up in arms is grade inflation.



JOE FORMISANO
POINT OF VIEW

taken the opportunity to remind students and parents that those A's and B's are under review. (It sure makes for great holiday fun to know that there might be a room full of people that you have never met discussing your grade and second-guessing a professor with whom you have spent 16 weeks just because the law of averages says you couldn't have earned the grade you received.)

This semester's edition of UNC's "You-think-you're-so-smart" report will come on the heels of a Harvard University study that examines the prevalence of high grades at the Ivy League school. And right on cue, UNC economics professor Boone Turchi has

Other institutions that have jumped on the bandwagon have discussed plans to systematically lower grades or attach an asterisk to classes that produce a large percentage of A's or A-'s. At UNC, there are no such strategies in place, but the threat is being held over

the heads of students and faculty. The term "grade inflation" can be taken to mean simply that students are receiving better grades. This definition is far too benign to have caused such a ruckus. Instead, the term has a connotation that grades are being artificially embellished, hence the need to "investigate the problem."

Apparently, the fact that the overall GPA at UNC has risen from 2.7 in 1987 to 3.0 in 1999 is enough to warrant the attention of faculty councils. The Harvard study recognized a few possible reasons for grade inflation, though anything short of an in-depth review of the papers and tests that earned the dangerously high grades is simply theorizing and conjecture. Harvard Professor Harvey Mansfield, the school's most outspoken combatant in the grade inflation

debate, has said that grades have risen because students are taking advantage of professors who are eager to get favorable evaluations. He adds that professors are afraid to deliver a blow to students' egos, so they avoid possibly stressful situations by awarding undeserved marks.

This type of analysis is faulty for many reasons, not the least of which is that it is basically impossible to refute because it is not based in any kind of evidence. Unfortunately, students have not received any better explanations. So maybe it's time for a discussion of realistic and plausible reasons as to why Carolina students, and students in general, are getting better grades. Pay attention because there might be a quiz on this material. And if you get all the answers, you might get a B+.

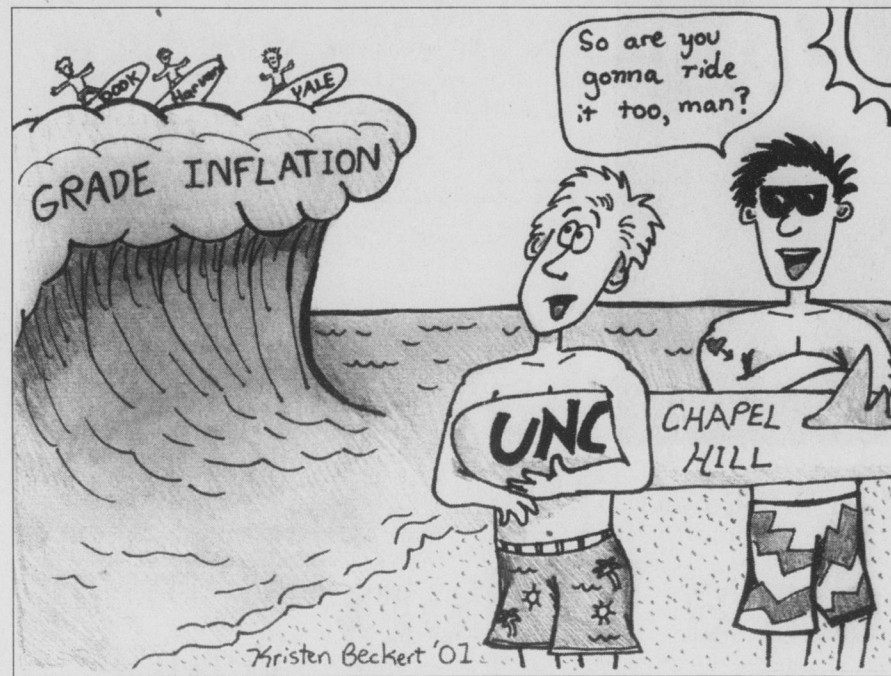
It is a shame that the only people who give credence to this argument are the students themselves. Some argue that successful high school students enter college unrealistically expecting A's and that these expectations lead to Mansfield's theories of "the spoiled-brat students versus the wimpy professor." In reality students earn their initial grades because they have spent at least a portion of their high school careers earning college credit through AP courses and individually designed curricula.

The period of adjustment once needed to acclimate freshmen into college scholarship is no longer necessary. My final argument in the great grading debate is actually very simple: technology. Steady improvement in overall GPA directly corresponds to the incorporation of the Internet into our educa-

tional society. The correlation is obvious: If you give students 24-hour access to unlimited information, they are going to write better papers. To expect anything less would be an insult to UNC students, who are routinely told that they are the best and the brightest.

Some people have argued that with all of these advantages, standards should be raised, but I argue that they already have. Suppose you wrote a paper without using any modern technology, while the rest of your class was doing it the normal way. What kind of grade would you expect? And after receiving that grade, could you petition for extra points because of grade deflation?

Reach Joe Formisano at josephformisano@hotmail.com.



Setting the Record Straight: Why We Chose to Walk Out

Let's get straight to the point. The action that took place Wednesday at David Horowitz's speech has been misinterpreted and misrepresented by many people over the last few days. It seems that some people might have attended a completely different event because their recollection of details is in some cases blatantly wrong. As one of the organizers of the action, I want to state the clear and undebatable facts.

KRISTI BOOKER
GUEST COLUMNIST

Fact: Last Wednesday's action was in support of free speech. Everyone involved fully supported Horowitz's right to express his opinions, but we also exercised our own right to demonstrate our opposition to some of his views. Many individuals representing several different student groups supported Wednesday's action. Among them were the Black Student Movement, the On the Wake of the Emancipation Campaign, Young Democrats, the Campus Y, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Students United for a Free Tibet, Campaign Against the Death Penalty, the Progressive Student Coalition, Queer Network for Change and students from Duke, N.C. State and N.C. Agricultural and Technical State universities. All students participating were there to respect Horowitz's right to say what he wants but also exercise their right to show opposition.

Fact: Wednesday's action was not in response to having a conservative speaker on campus. Nobody involved was there because Horowitz is conservative; we demonstrated our opposition to the racist rhetoric he uses to enforce his opinions. If it was felt that our campus needed a conservative voice, people such as William F. Buckley, Thomas Sowell, Elizabeth Dole and Condoleezza Rice would have been much more effective because they do not resort to racially attacking and misrepresenting certain groups.

Fact: Our walkout was not a reaction to Horowitz's position on reparations, nor are we implying that anyone who is opposed to reparations is racist. In fact, some of the people in solidarity with us do not think that reparations should be given to descendants of African-American slaves. We are simply not in support of the racist remarks that Horowitz makes with regard to his views on reparations and other issues. Just for clarification on what we mean by "racist", here are some examples of Horowitz's statements concerning African Americans:

"Black homes do not provide educational support for

their children."
"African Americans are failing because they are not prepared by their families and their culture to succeed."
"Those blacks who are chronically unemployed are unemployed not because there are no jobs nor because they are barred from jobs by their skin color but because they are unemployable."

Once again, Horowitz has every right to voice these opinions, but we also have every right to demonstrate our opposition to them.

Fact: The people who participated in Wednesday's action were completely silent from the moment the first speaker walked on stage until we had completely exited the building. Once again, this was done to show consideration for Horowitz's right to state his opinions while at the same time respectfully demonstrating our opposition to his racist comments. There were people in attendance who chose to yell and scream as we left, but they were none other than Horowitz supporters.

Fact: After the walkout, Horowitz said that we did not have the brains to stay and argue with him, while others insisted that in lieu of our action, we should have used that opportunity to engage in discussion or debate with Horowitz. In fact, after exercising the right to free speech and expressing their disagreement, several members of the BSM came back to listen to the remainder of the speech and to participate in the question-and-answer session. Unfortunately, Horowitz never entertained their questions. It was also asked why we didn't invite Horowitz to participate in a forum or a debate about these issues. In truth, two invitations were made including a possible co-sponsorship with the BSM pending additional information concerning Horowitz's visit. That information was never provided. I hope these facts clear up any misconceptions. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend an open invitation to the College Republicans and anybody else who would like to express any further opinions about this issue to come to the BSM general body meeting this Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. in Upendo Lounge located on the second floor of Chase. Please come to have an open dialogue and let yourselves be heard. Walkouts are also welcome.

Kristi Booker is the president of the BSM. She can be reached at kbooker@email.unc.edu.

RESPONSES TO DAVID HOROWITZ

Letter Writer Distorts Account of Horowitz Walkout and Protest

TO THE EDITOR:
It is disappointing as well as heart-breaking when one realizes that he or she has chosen to attend a university where his or her race is not only referred to as "these people" but is also perceived as dumb, uncivilized, immature and juvenile just because of a decision to take a stand against a racial injustice. But what can one expect knowing that history repeats itself and there was a time when our own leaders were spit upon for the same actions. Therefore, although many African-American readers of The Daily Tar Heel were enraged after reading Andrew Herman's letter, ("Student Calls Protest Ineffective; It Made Group Look Immature," Nov. 30) it is obvious that his perception was merely based on a brainwashed rendition of the beliefs of Horowitz himself. In fact, his outlook must be brainwashed because if Herman were actually paying attention to the protest, he would have noticed that the demonstration was silent except for the hurtful remarks that were yelled at the protesters telling them that they couldn't "handle the truth." Let's not forget the "civilized" remarks of Horowitz himself, which brought the attention from his own speech to the demonstration by comments informing the audience of the display and sarcastically stating, "it was either time for the expected demonstration or everyone needed to go the bathroom at once."

Maybe Herman did hear a ruckus caused by the protesters, but if so, it was definitely not verbal but instead the sounds made by the hearts of the protesters as they walked out of the auditorium knowing that the very individuals who were clapping because of their exit could possibly be those who sit beside them throughout their daily schedules. No one should attend a university where he or she is afraid to stand up for what he or she believes in.

It remains an enigma to me that Herman can perceive a demonstration formed to promote equality as being a portrayal of having free time. Maybe that's what was said to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. too, but, like he did, we all have dreams, and although we may be members of the minority at UNC, until we receive the equality that we deserve we will continue to take a stand as the majority.

Gahmya Drummond-Bey
Freshman
Pre-Med and Psychology

Chanel Francis
Freshman
Business and Public Policy

David Horowitz, Not Protesters, Is Working For Free Speech

TO THE EDITOR:
The way your writer lambasted David Horowitz in the hate-filled "David Horowitz Quotables" on Nov.

30 was pathetic. You took comments out of context in an attempt to make Horowitz look fanatical and idiotic. In reality, it is your writer who appears to be foolish, and the protesters from On the Wake of Emancipation who look hypocritical. Horowitz was supportive of free speech from everyone - while he himself believed the teach-ins to be "despicable and disgraceful," his main problem was not with the teach-ins themselves but with the fact that there had been no corresponding show of support for our brave troops who fight for your and my freedom overseas. Since the protesters, on the other hand, could not complain about disproportionate representation, they tried to suggest that Horowitz should be stripped of his right to speak at all. It's simple: Horowitz encouraged free speech for all, while the protesters protested Horowitz's right to free speech while complaining that he was taking theirs. Hypocritical? I think so. I'm sorry that your columnist could make no sense of Horowitz's declaration that "A university is supposed to teach you to have an open mind and think." Maybe it is because he has been successfully brainwashed and believes that only liberal, anti-American viewpoints should be espoused on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus. If you would print the entire speech, maybe the student body could indeed think for itself - just what Horowitz suggests should happen.

Joseph Ahearn
Freshman
Business and Political Science

The Daily Tar Heel

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A Mission That Must Change As UNC Moves Into the Future

Having secured over \$500 million in bonds from the voters of North Carolina and embarked on a new private capital campaign, the University of North Carolina stands at a crossroads. The school continues to feel a direct responsibility to North Carolina's interests while striving to

Proponents of the policy believe that UNC best serves North Carolina by educating residents of the state. In reality, admitting only N.C. residents detracts from the educational atmosphere for all students, limits the opportunities of graduates and damages the school's national and international reputation.

EDWARD MARSHALL
GUEST COLUMNIST

public school in the country. The two interests of course do not appear incongruous, and many leaders will tell you that it is possible to satisfy both. They are wrong. UNC's mission statement is in need of revision if it hopes to become the best public school in the United States.

Rather than state that UNC serves the people of North Carolina, it should state that it serves the world. The change in mission would serve as a simple but radical departure from the school's obsessive focus on North Carolina. Charlotte is now a financial center to the country, and Research Triangle Park a research center to the world. The state's unparalleled economic growth and newfound prosperity are a direct result of residents having the vision to look beyond North Carolina and the region to take advantage of opportunities around the globe. Numerous UNC faculty already do the same, and the school should boldly state as much in its mission statement. The changed mission would reflect the new circumstances in which UNC serves the people of North Carolina.

In keeping with its new mission, UNC should increase the number of out-of-state and international students. The state legislature requires that UNC admit 82 percent of its undergraduate students from within North Carolina.

Our state and nation have become more and more integrated with and dependent upon our global economy and society, yet our university remains trapped in educating almost nine out of 10 students from within its small borders!

While no one can quantify the value of geographic diversity precisely, UNC educators have long championed diversity in numerous other forms for good reason. Geographic diversity should not be excepted.

Why does geographic diversity improve the educational experience? Last spring, I attended a panel discussion on ethics at UNC's graduate school of business, the only school that admits one-third of its students from overseas. By the end of the discussion, I had heard student perspectives and anecdotes related to trade in mainland China, medicine in sub-Saharan Africa, construction in France and finance in Brazil. While a business school class consisting exclusively of N.C. residents would certainly have been qualified to participate in a similar discussion on ethics, I do not imagine the outcome would be nearly as enlightening.

A lack of educational diversity not only limits the educational experience for UNC students but career opportunities for graduates as well. UNC enjoys a unique but precarious reputation

among elite schools in this country. Its graduates are admitted to top graduate programs and excel in many careers throughout the country. In short, UNC is well represented at the top.

However, a lack of out-of-state and international students will begin to hurt UNC more and more moving forward. Harvard is no longer a club for Groton and Andover graduates from Connecticut and New York; it is an international hub of intellectual life. Leading universities have long realized that to excel they need to attract students from around the country and world. Meanwhile, UNC remains bound to a provincial recruitment requirement.

UNC will not abandon its public traditions by accepting more out of state and international students than it does currently. If it aspires to be the best, UNC should focus on attracting the most highly qualified, and deserving, residents of North Carolina and place them in a school commensurate with their background. Allowing the natural consequences of a moderate increase in out-of-state enrollment to take place would attract a more qualified student body from around the country and overseas that in turn would attract an even more qualified, and deserving, N.C. resident.

By reaching out to students beyond our state's tiny border, UNC will take an important step to achieving world-class recognition. Otherwise, UNC risks providing a bland educational experience, indistinguishable from that of countless other state schools in the country. UNC and our state deserve better.

Edward Marshall is a joint degree student at the UNC School of Law and Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs. He can be reached at eam2005@columbia.edu.