

## Oregon GPAs are on the rise, but don't celebrate yet

A report from the Oregon Association of Scholars says improved scores are the result of grade inflation, and could be making it difficult for employers to discern high achievers from the also-rans.

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The data below shows what appears to be an overwhelmingly positive trend: The grade point averages of students at several Oregon public universities are trending higher than the national average. Smart students, right? Don't be so sure, says an analysis from the Oregon Association of Scholars. The group, the state's chapter of the National Association of Scholars, contends the increasing GPAs are evidence of grade inflation: a systematic softening of grading standards that's making it difficult for employers, parents, graduate schools or public agencies to differentiate the high-achievers from the ones just getting by.

"If we go back to the '60s, where the average GPA was a 2.2, they used to call it the 'gentleman C.' If you show up to class, do a bit of reading and do what you think is expected, you walk away with a C. Now, that sort of engagement gets you a B or a B-plus," said [Bruce Gilley](#), a political science professor at [Portland State University](#) and chapter president of the Oregon Association of Scholars. At the [University of Oregon](#) alone, 40 percent of all grades given to undergraduate students in the fall quarter were A's,' Gilley said.

For its part, the University of Oregon — while it hadn't studied Association of Scholars data — said it takes grade inflation seriously. "We have mechanisms in place to keep track of such trends and look to make continuous improvements to ensure that the quality of the education our students receive is never diminished," said [Scott Coltrane](#), UO's provost and senior vice president.

By contrast, Portland State University expressed pride in the increasing GPAs of its student body. [Sona Karentz Andrews](#), PSU's provost and vice president for academic affairs, credited the increased quality of faculty and students, along with improved classroom experience and a focus on academic advising, for the higher grades.

“This is not about lowering the bar, but rather raising the opportunities for students to master the knowledge we want them to learn,” Andrews said.

Gilley contends the easiest immediate solution to grade inflation is transparency: in particular, making it a requirement that student transcripts include the average class grade alongside each grade. “This would allow students and outsiders alike to judge their performance relative to their peers,” he said.

