

MEMORANDUM

TO: Matt Hudelson, Executive Secretary
Faculty Senate

FROM: Becky Bitter, Registrar's Office

FOR: Academic Affairs Committee

DATE: November 21, 2024

SUBJECT: AAC Comments on Grade Inflation and Enrollment-Based Budgeting Senate Post

In response to the Faculty Senate's request that AAC review a forum post about grade inflation and enrollment-based budgeting (see [Grade inflation and enrollment-based budgeting | Faculty Senate | Washington State University](#)), members discussed the topic at their November 19th meeting.

AAC members had these comments:

- In the physical sciences and mathematics, the discussion about grading has typically been that the number of C- and below grades given was too high, but the context for the discussion was never about raising grading to meet some enrollment-based budgeting goal.
- Committee members weren't convinced that grade inflation was tied to enrollment-based budgeting. They thought that there were many other factors that have to do with grade inflation, including better teaching resulting in higher grades.
- It was noted that there are more students who use the access center services now and that these students are rightfully being given more time on assignments or exams, which can mean higher success rates and grades.
- There has been a culture shift that says that faculty should be more flexible with students, that they are under more stress, even post-pandemic. Flexibility can result in higher grades.
- For reinstatement, it was noted that on average there are still the same number of students who are deficient, so grade inflation is not impacting deficiency rates.
- Because of different teaching strategies, students can earn higher grades based on more activities. For example, if students earn points on engagement, among other things, then we would expect grades to go up.
- There is a different expectation for grading now. It used to be that we had to hold to the bell curve. That's no longer true. In some courses now, faculty may have to explain their D, F, W rates.
- Different disciplines have different approaches to assessment and evaluation of student work so there can't be a one-size fits all approach.
- There has been an investment by the university about how teachers can teach more successfully which leads to higher student success.
- Finally, a question: If there are numerically higher grades, this is not translating to higher retention. Why is that?

AAC members appreciated the opportunity to discuss this but did not have specific advice for next steps.