

DEFLATING GRADY

Part I – Maintaining Standards

The following is an e-mail exchange between Prof. Grady Rizeng and his chair, Lois Marks, that Prof. Rizeng has forwarded to Dean Nolira.

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Sunday, January 09, 2005 11:31 PM
To: A. C. Nolira
Subject: FW: RE: RE: RE: RE: Maintaining our standards

Dean Nolira,
Can you believe what I have to put up with? I'm begging you to do something about the way I'm treated by this tyrant!

Grady Rizeng
University Distinguished Professor

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Sunday, January 09, 2005 8:25 PM
To: Grady Rizeng
Subject: RE: RE: RE: RE: Maintaining our standards

I'm not saying that. What concerns me is that your grades reflect a different standard and that has all sorts of implications. Let's meet tomorrow morning at 8 to discuss grade inflation. That's not too early for you I hope.

Lois Marks
Department Chair

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Sunday, January 09, 2005 3:22 PM
To: Lois Marks
Subject: RE: RE: RE: Maintaining our standards

But as you said yourself, we get really good students. Do you really think half of them should get C's or lower?

Grady Rizeng
University Distinguished Professor

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Saturday, January 08, 2005 8:19 PM
To: Grady Rizeng
Subject: RE: RE: Maintaining our standards

That's fine, but perhaps you need to redefine the criteria for excellence. Do you think this is Lake Wobegon where all the students are above average? From your grades, I can't tell who the best students are.

Lois Marks
Department Chair



Institute for Transforming Undergraduate Education, University of Delaware, January 2005.
Modified for Lilly East Conference, April 17, 2008
Written by Hal White and George Watson
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-----Original Message-----

Sent: Friday, January 07, 2005 4:53 PM
To: Lois Marks
Subject: RE: Maintaining our standards

Absolutely. With all due respect, I don't accept the premise that low grades necessarily mean high standards. They could mean unreasonable standards or poor teaching. I have taught my courses for many years and have well-defined criteria for an A. If everyone achieves those criteria, then everyone gets an A. Of course the converse is true as well.

Grady Rizeng
University Distinguished Professor

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Friday, January 07, 2005 3:13 PM
To: Grady Rizeng
Subject: Maintaining our standards

As you should be aware, this department is well known for its rigor. We attract excellent students and they work hard. For many years the average grades given in this department have been among the lowest on campus, which reflects our demanding standards.

My reason for writing you is that grades in this department have risen in recent years and the grades you give are among the highest in the department—63% A's and B's. Do you really think your students deserved those grades?

Lois Marks
Department Chair

Assignment for Part I:

1. ***As a group, come to consensus on a definition that your group should write down on the poster paper provided. Write large enough so that others in the room can read it when it is posted on the wall.]***



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