



Grade Inflation (Compression) in the U.S. and at UMN

Christopher J. Cramer

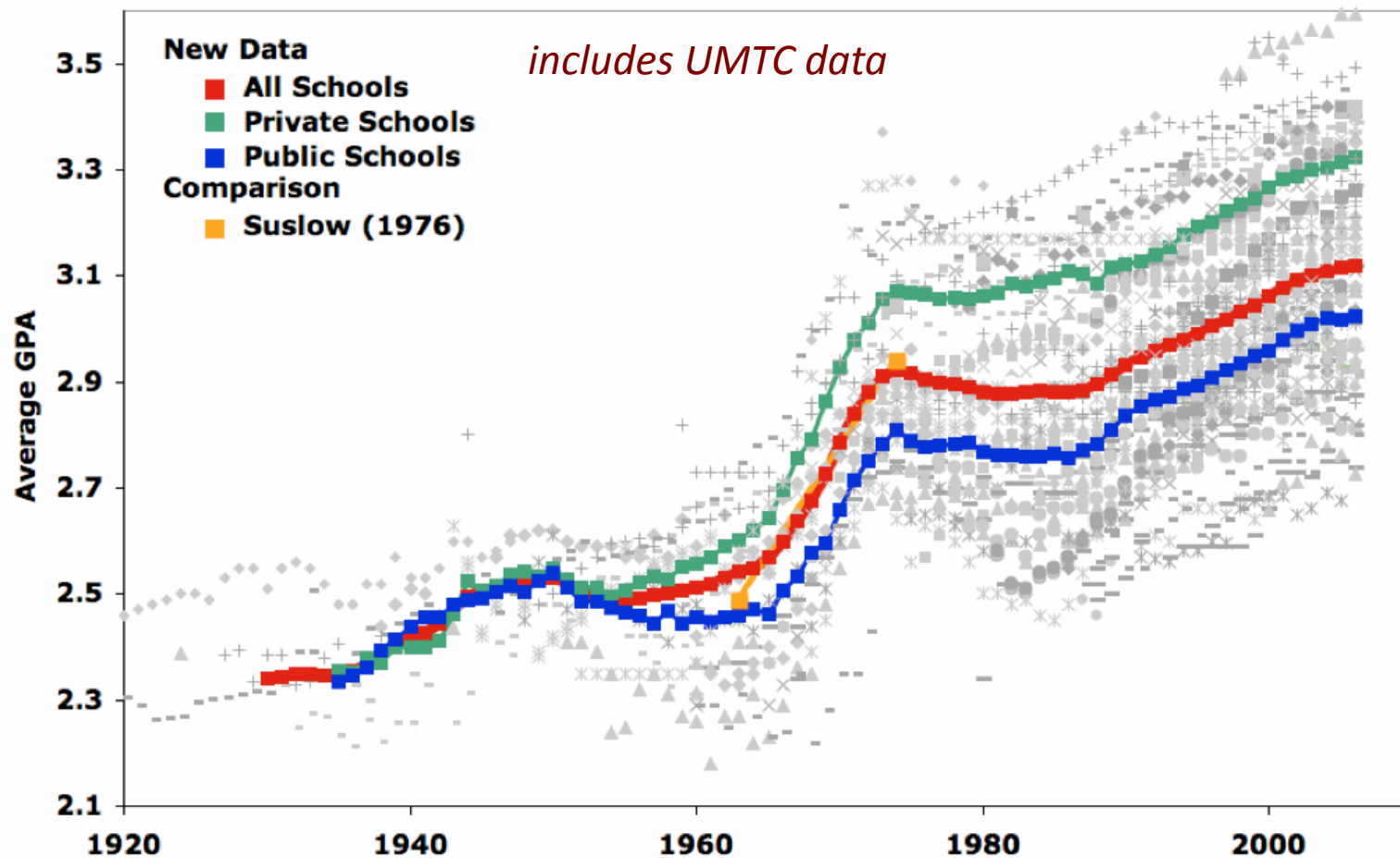
University of Minnesota, October 6, 2012

Retreat of the UMN Academy of Distinguished Teachers



Grade Inflation* — What is It?

Average GPA by Year for Different Schools

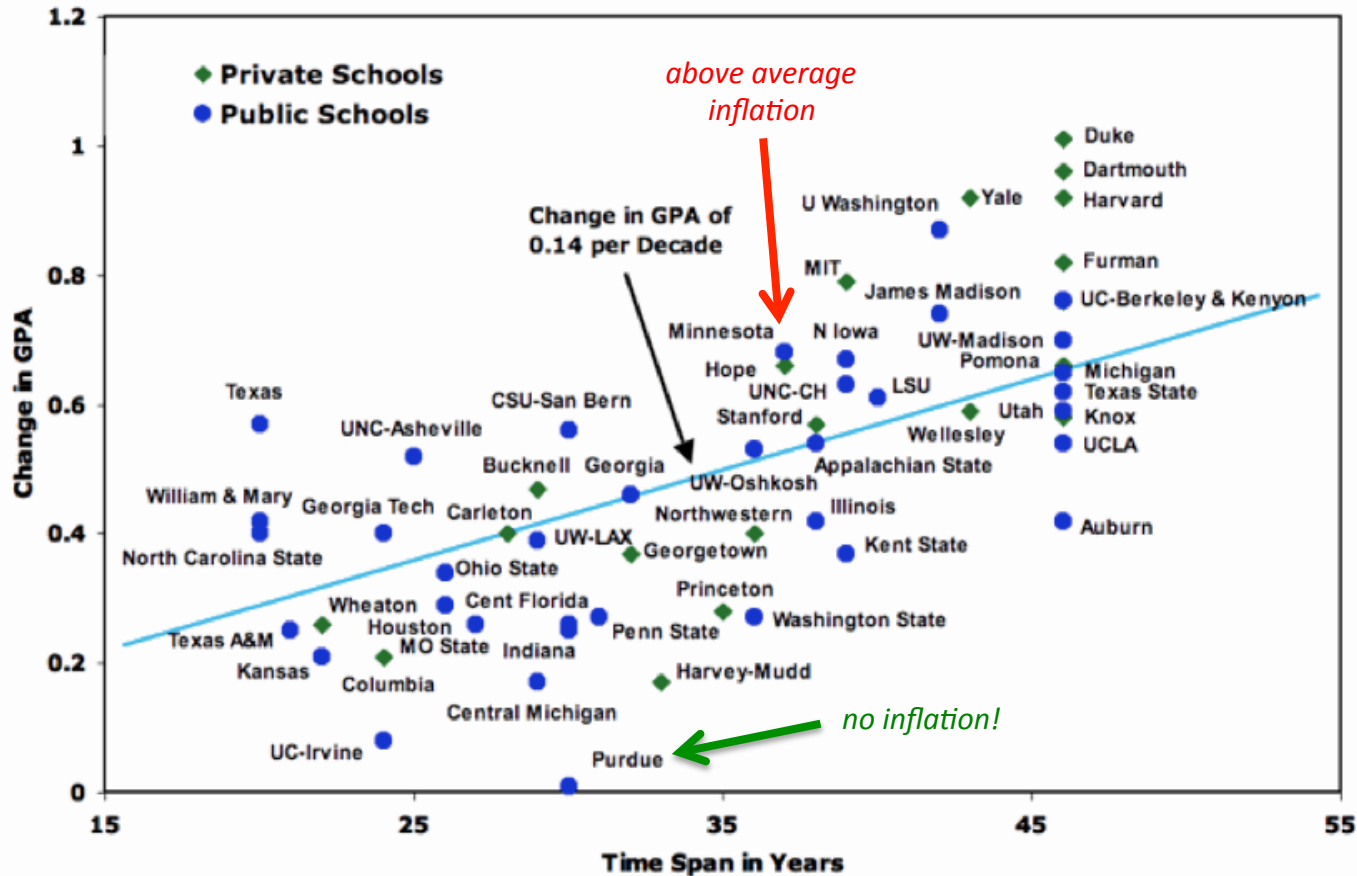


Source: Stuart Rojstaczer, <http://www.tcrecord.org/PrintContent.asp?ContentID=15928>
see also www.gradeinflation.com for many, many references and data

** Some regard grade “compression” as the more accurate term as inflation of GPA beyond 4.0 will not be possible, absent introduction of a new top grade...*

Grade Inflation —UMTC Data

Long Term Grade Inflation By Institution



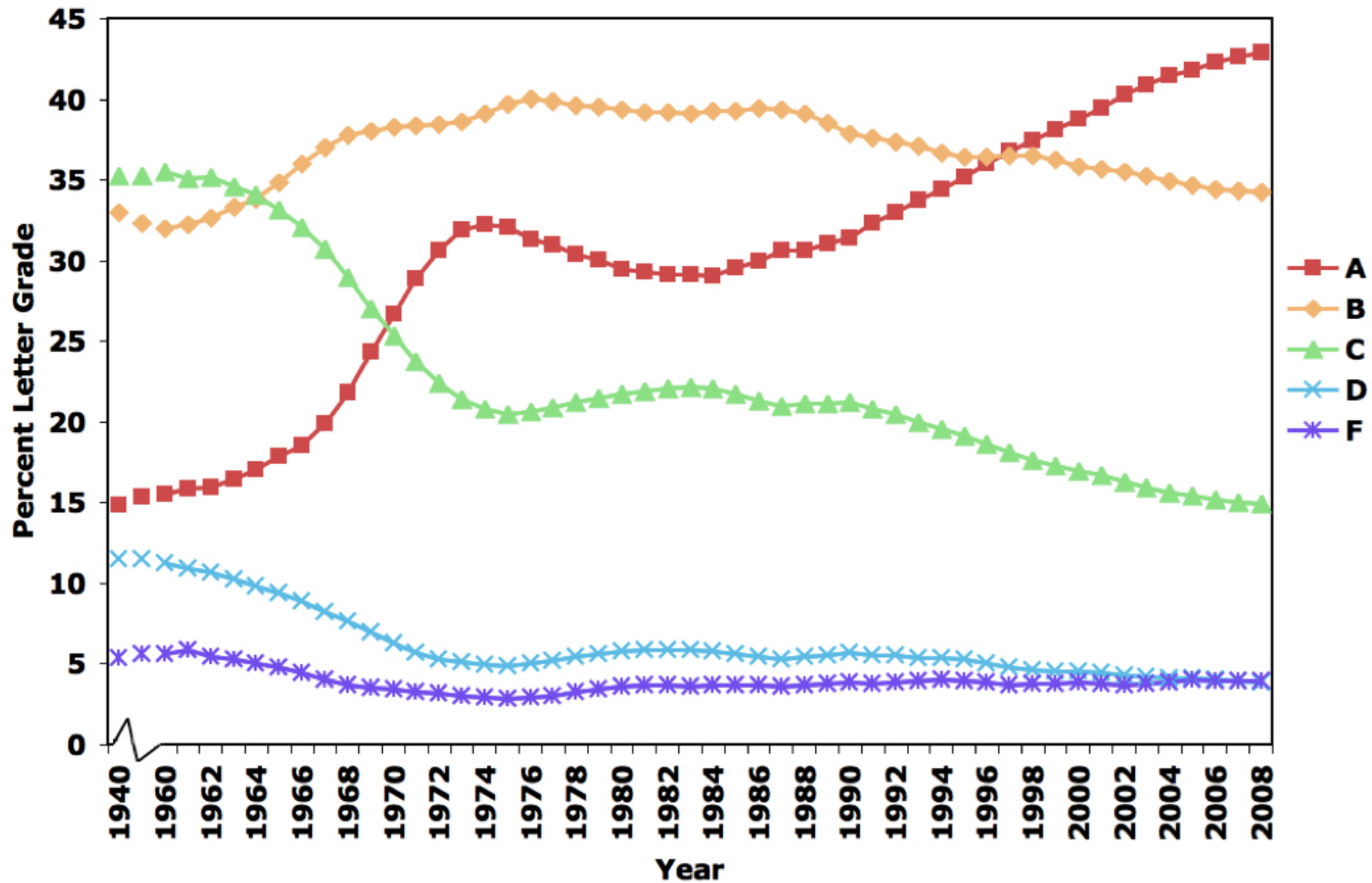
The further you are above the light blue line, the worse your grade inflation is compared to “average” grade inflation (permits comparison of schools having different ranges of annual data)

Source: www.gradeinflation.com

UMN is worst among big 10 schools with respect to grade inflation.
 Note Purdue’s outlier resistance to grade inflation over 30 years.

How'd That Happen?

A has replaced C as the most common grade. Now # A > # B > # C (not exactly gaussian...)

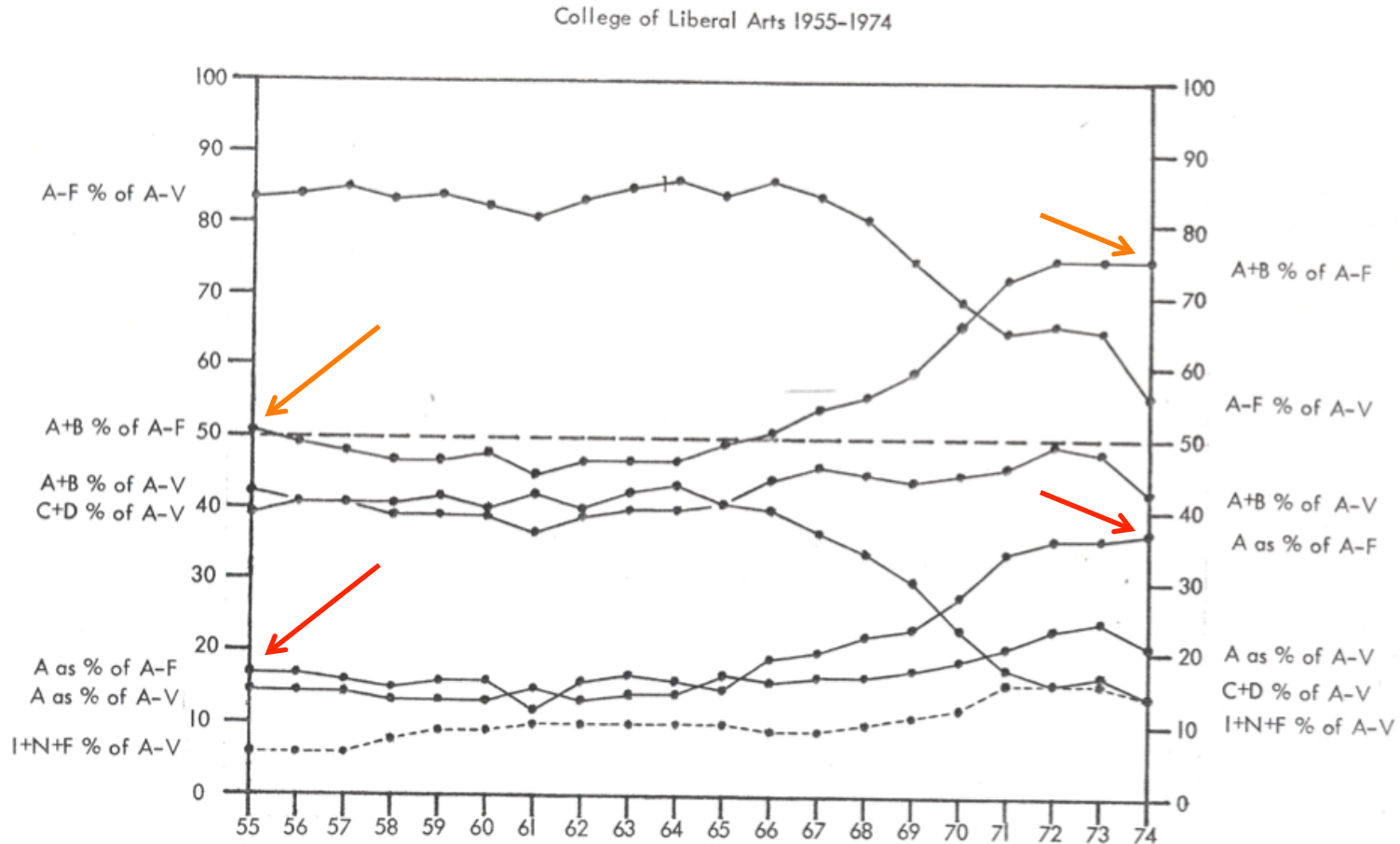


Source: S. Rojstaczer and C. Healy, <http://www.tcrecord.org/PrintContent.asp?ContentID=16473>

See also: http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/07/14/researchers_publish_new_analysis_of_grade_inflation

Really? UMN (TC) Too?

Yes

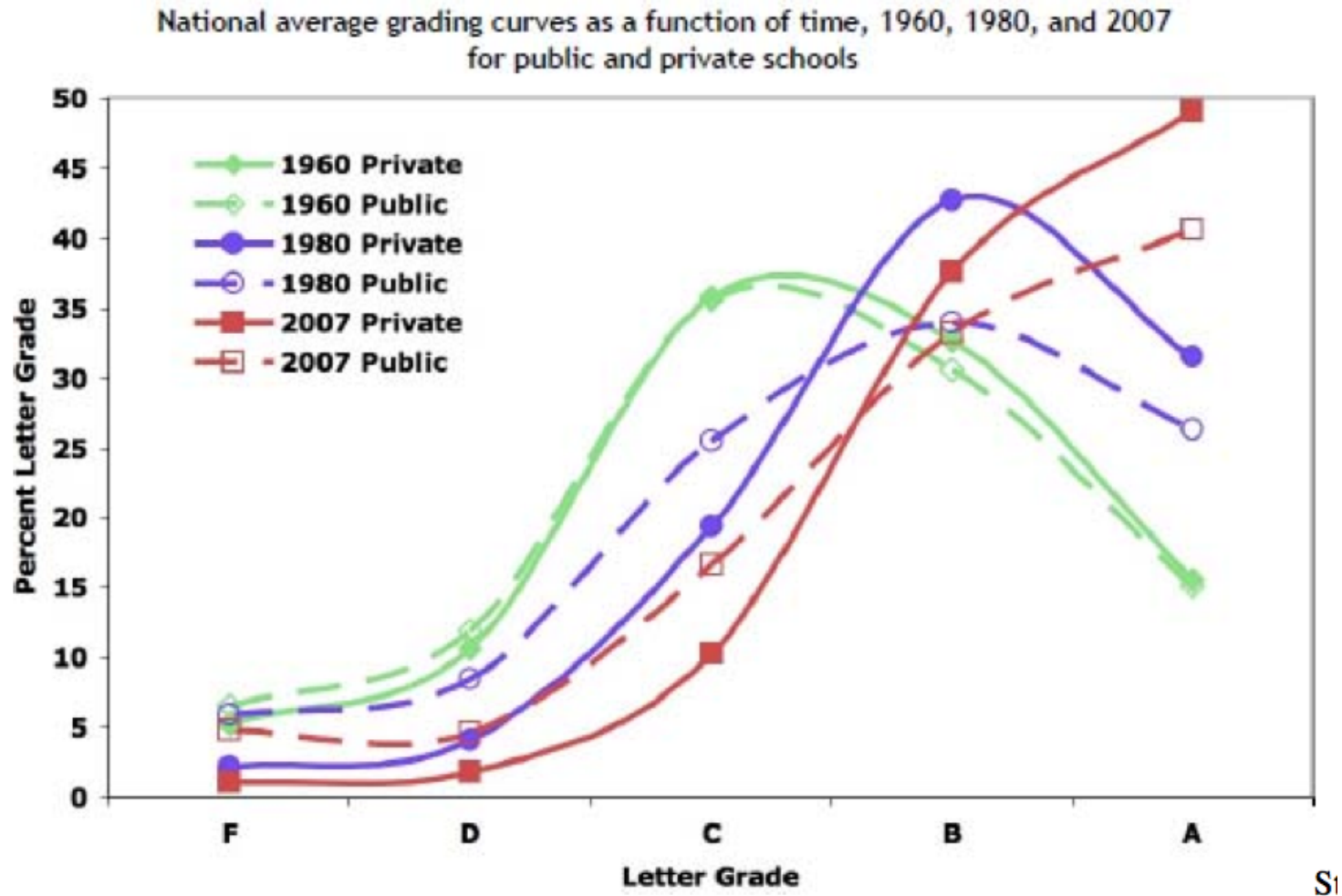


20% increase in A grades, 25% increase in A+B grades, must be at expense of others

Source: University Senate records, Provostal reports, etc. (Dr. G. Engstrand)

Just in Case You Like Gaussians (or the Lack Thereof)

A History of College Grade Inflation - NYTimes.com



Source: Catherine Rampell, <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/14/the-history-of-college-grade-inflation/>

Is That Uniform By College?

Absolutely not

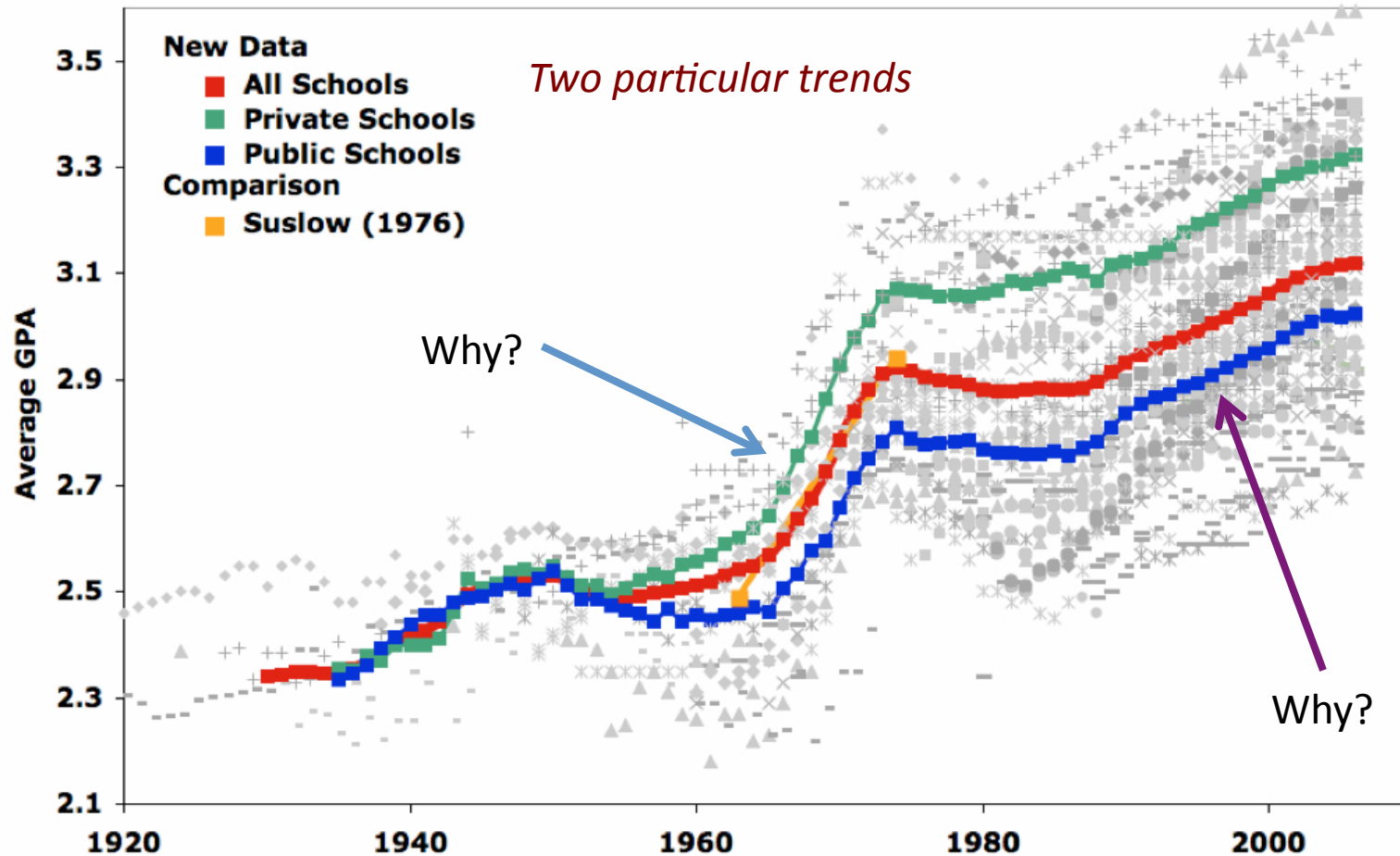
2011 1000 level grades in undergraduate-admitting colleges

Academic Group	Grades	GPA	Pct A's
CBS	2536	2.93	24.6%
CDES	1184	3.11	41.0%
CFANS	2635	3.08	42.3%
CLA	23564	3.20	46.1%
CSE	14498	2.74	29.5%
CSOM	483	3.07	28.4%
EHD	7036	3.31	60.9%

Data provided to Senate Committee on Educational Policy every year, for all colleges, by course level, and duly reported to Faculty Senate, and duly forgotten immediately thereafter (meh)

Is it fair that students from one college might be compared against students from another with a very different average GPA under certain circumstances?

Grade Inflation — Redux



Source: Stuart Rojstaczer, <http://www.tcrecord.org/PrintContent.asp?ContentID=15928>
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Speculation About Reasons

- Vietnam (poor male calculus skills don't merit death)
- Student evaluation of teaching (you rub my back...)
- Lazy (or overworked) faculty (no complaints about A's!)
- Compassionate faculty (tuition is so darn high!)
- Foolish resistance to use of S/N grading
- Irritation at the whole *notion* of grades
- Conflation of "effort" with "performance"

UMN policy states: All grades for academic work are based on the quality of the work submitted, not on hours of effort, and that an "A" should represent: achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

<http://www.policy.umn.edu/policies/education/education/gradingtranscripts.html>

Who Cares?

Students!

When so many students receive the highest possible grade, great students cannot differentiate themselves, and employers have trouble interpreting a student's GPA.

Editorial, *Minnesota Daily*,
March 29, 2010

New grade reporting
method better for
students and teachers.


Editorial, *Minnesota Daily*,
June 6, 2012

Colleagues!

Grading that misrepresents student performance sends a false message, and it robs the best students of credit for their good work. It is misleading, **and it eventually strips the faculty member and the university of professional credibility.**

Bulk and Monte, White Paper,
UW La Crosse Senate
<http://www.uwlax.edu/facultysenate/Archived%20Documents/PositionPapers/bulk-monte.pdf>

By the Way, Did You Know...?

Cramer, Christopher Taken this course? Be the first to leave a recommendation.  (MyEdu Member)

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities / Professors / Chemistry

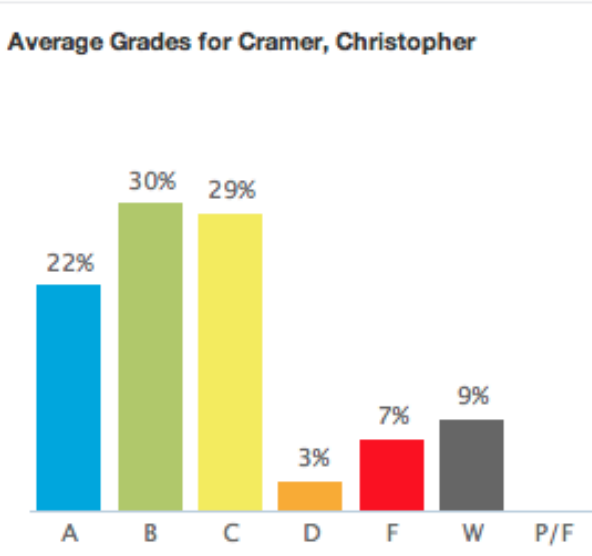
[Overview](#) [Courses](#) [Recommendations](#)

Courses Cramer, Christopher Teaches

CHEM 1905		+ Add to Schedule
CHEM 2302	2.5 GPA	+ Add to Schedule
CHEM 3501	2.4 GPA	+ Add to Schedule
CHEM 3502	2.6 GPA	+ Add to Schedule
CHEM 4021	2.6 GPA	+ Add to Schedule

[See All](#)

Average Grades for Cramer, Christopher



A	22%
B	30%
C	29%
D	3%
F	7%
W	9%
P/F	0%

Every year, myedu.com makes a public records request of grade distributions, by class and by instructor, across the nation and makes the data available on its website. Think students might look to see which instructors give the highest grades at their institution? Nah... Probably not. Certainly no reason to agree to any sort of standards...

So, What to Do?

1949: b. That this report serve as a basis for departmental discussions within the University on the philosophy and mechanics of grading. Some of the issues which might appropriately be considered in such discussions:

Source: University Senate minutes, 1948-1949

1999: Each college, department and program should discuss what the standards of the Uniform Grading Policy mean for its courses and programs, and what expectations the faculty have of students in their field of knowledge in order to achieve those standards.

Source: Senate Committee on Educational Policy report to University Senate, 1999

2012: Professor [--] moved that the Committee affirm the 1999 statement requesting that departments have discussions about grading and that the Committee also ask the associate deans to facilitate the discussions by sending questions to departments and faculty members and asking them to report the result of the conversations.

Source: minutes of Senate Committee on Educational Policy, 9/19/12

63 years of discussion — and people think Congress can kick a can down a road...
Maybe it's time to *do* something, instead?

Any Other Options?

DISCUSS!

#AIsTheNewS