

# Why colleges shower their students with a's essay



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If It's Not Broken, Don't Fix It Not just " Americans", but " consumers" - the concept of consumerism has rapidly increased over the past decades in America, and has nearly pervaded all areas of life from the professional workplace, to the personal home, all the way to your child's classrooms. Even colleges and universities play the role of a corporation by using elaborate techniques and strategies to attract students near and far. The " more more more" mentality does not exclude the educational environment.

Brent Staples argues that this consumerism has affected the higher education system because colleges are now handing out A's due to competition and student demand. In his " Why Colleges Shower Their Students with A's," Staples urges for an adjustment in the grading system of higher education institutions because of this. However, Staples fails to establish compelling reasons that call for the flawed solution. Staples provides various reasons why colleges " shower students with A's" (215) in order to create a warrant for his solution.

However, his credibility is questioned because he provides various claims that lack hard evidence. Statements that grade inflation is prevalent in all levels of higher education institutions, departments issuing good grades to keep their courses, and administrators pushing professors to inflate grades (215-216) are all presented without any form of evidence. Students are left wondering if this fraud is actually occurring at their colleges and parents question if their child's professors are committing this counterfeit.

It is here, quite early on in his essay where these claims are made, that Staples fails to create a firm foundation to build his argument and solution

upon. Staples' claims do ring with value on a basic emotional and logical value, but they lack credibility. He appeals on the emotional level by presenting the example of part-time teachers and saying they " have no job security and who now teach more than half of all college courses" (216) and that " writing in the last issue of the journal *Academe*, two part-timers suggest that students routinely corner adjuncts, threatening to complain if they do not turn C's into A's" (216).

Staples provides a source, but this piece fails to convince. It only involves a mere two part time educators - this number is not significant enough of a number in this situation for any radical action to be taken that will effect a whole educational system. Furthermore, the two educators simply " suggest," which does not have a strong enough connotation to persuade readers that this is a serious matter. This example from Staples seems like a desperate attempt, which further discounts his credibility, because he is relying on such a small.

This also makes the example seem exaggerated, which makes it even harder to believe. Although the incidents may be true, readers are left wondering how often these incidents actually occur, if at all. Staples would have benefited by presenting a greater number of such incidents or how often they occur, and even possibly testimony. Staples continues to say, " The argument that grades are rising because students are better prepared is simply not convincing.

The evidence suggests that students and parents are demanding - and getting - what they think of as their money's worth" (216) He not only fails

to take the opposing views into consideration, but also fails, again, to provide the evidence that suggests what he himself is also trying to prove. At this point, Staples has continuously failed to provide any substantial and convincing evidence or examples of the supposed prevalence of grade inflation.

Without a significant problem, there is no warrant or need for the drastic change that Staples pushes for. Ultimately, Staples proposes his solution of changing how grade point averages (GPA) are calculated. He suggests that courses graded more heavily should also carry more weight when calculating grade point average (216). There are multiple flaws with this solution, however. Firstly, Staples fails to acknowledge the opposing fact that colleges may be handing out more high grades because students are actually earning them.

If this is indeed the case, there is not the problem that Staples suggests exists. Furthermore, granted that some courses, such as the maths and sciences, are graded heavier than others, such as the arts, courses should not be compared essentially based on worth because the educational and experience value of courses should not be summed up into numbers and it is not fair. Earlier on in his essay, Staples notes that “ departments shower students with A’s to fill poorly attended courses that might otherwise be canceled” (215).

His proposed solution would continue to worsen the problem because students will not be as motivated to work hard to earn high grades in the courses with lesser value in the grade point average calculation because of

the mentality that these courses do not mean much in the end anyway. Also, these courses may not receive high registration or attendance because students will be discouraged to waste their time or money on a course that, again, will not hold much value in the long run.

Moreover, the solution favors courses such as maths and sciences over other courses such as humanities and arts. This puts students who are not “math/science” people at a disadvantage. For example, in order to graduate, students are required to take various required or core general education courses that range from humanities to sciences. A student whose math is not his or her forte will suffer even more heavily from the new system because the low grade will affect the overall grade point average greater.

Conversely, a student whose math is his or her forte will suffer much less if he or she does not do well in an art class because that class holds much less weight in the grade point average calculation. That the educational system in America is perfect is laughable. But to bring to attention a seemingly small problem and to propose a significant solution is not. Staples rhetoric fails to induce alarm about grade inflation through his lack of credibility.

Without a real problem, his solution is not only unnecessary, but would actually worsen the problem, be unfair and put students at a great disadvantage. Staples refers to consumerism as the root of grade inflation, but he himself could let the “more more more” mentality pervade his essay by providing “more more more” substantial and compelling evidence, as well as a more well-thought out solution. Work Cited Staples, Brent. “Why

Colleges Shower Their Students with A's. " The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction. New York: W. W. Norton &, 2012. Print.