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Departments deal A's unevenly

By PHIL LEMMAN
Of the Emerald

Reports from the University registrar's office indicate that taking classes in certain University departments or schools may increase the probability of a student getting above-average grades.

In the "Profile of Students" report for 1980 spring and fall terms and 1981 winter term, some academic departments more than doubled the University average percentage of As and Bs awarded.

A breakdown of grades given to all University undergraduates during those three terms shows approximately 20 percent of grades given were As, 26 percent Bs, 18 percent Cs and 19 percent Ps (pass). The remaining 17 percent includes 5 percent withdrawals, 3 percent Ds, and less than 2 percent each for Fs, no pass, incompletes, Ys (no basis for grade) and Xs (incorrect or no grade reported).

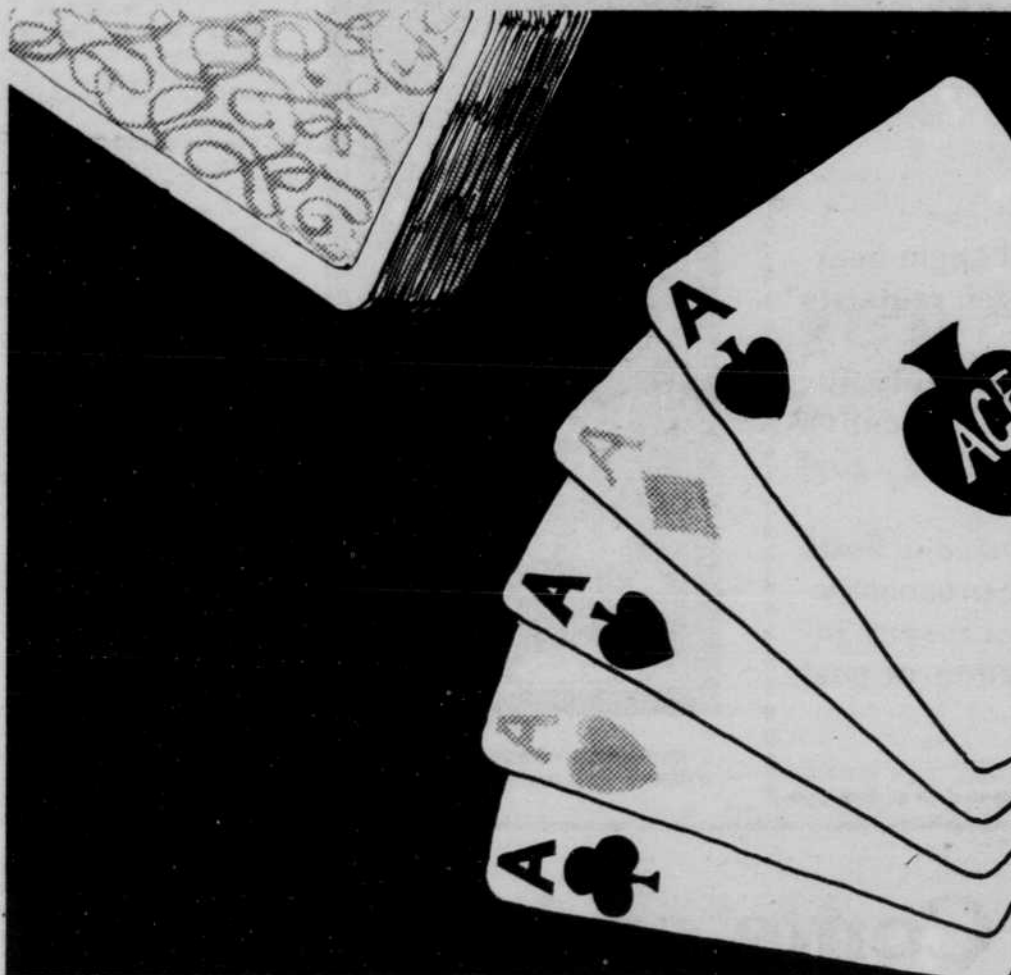
The report shows professional schools such as business, education and music tend to award high grades more often, averaging as high as 41 percent As in the music school. Generally, school officials credit entrance standards and large percentages of upper-division students and majors in classes to explain the high grades.

The average GPA of students entering the education school, ranked 13th nationally, is 3.2, up almost a full letter grade since minimum GPA standards were adopted four years ago, school officials say.

In the journalism, business and education schools most of the coursework in the major is done in the student's junior and senior year. Reports from the registrar's office show that upper-division students get slightly better grades.

Professional schools are not alone in awarding above-average grades. Several departments reported grades noticeably above average during the period studied.

The Department of Military Science averaged almost 89 percent A and B grades during the study period, with the percentage of As given showing a substantial increase in the last three years.



Graphic by Max DeRungs

The department reported an average of about 40 percent As in 1977, then increased to more than 75 percent during the study period.

One explanation might be a complete turnover in teaching staff in 1977, says a former head of the department who asked that his name not be used.

Lt. Col. Steve Wolfgram, who took command of the department in June, attributes the grades to small class size, close personal contact between faculty and students and many one-credit classes.

Wolfgram says he expects students to be able to get an A grade from a one-credit class, saying "it is not terribly difficult material."

"We do not give gifts," he says.

Department grades are based on lab exercises in land navigation and leadership skills, and classroom work in military organization and philosophy.

The Women's Studies Program,

which also had a recent staff change, averaged 38 percent As and 37 percent B grades given during the study period.

Mary Jo Wagner, acting director, says the program offers "the only courses that women take at the University that deal directly with them." This leads to high student motivation, which combined with small class size, account for the above-average grades, she explains.

Reorganization of the program was necessary because "it had gotten the reputation as a mickey," says Barre Toelken, first-year director of the Folklore and Ethnic Studies Program.

Toelken, with 14 years experience teaching in the program, says grading standards were lowered in an attempt to make ethnic classes available to ethnic students who were here without graduating from high school. The Folklore Program gave 65 percent A and B grades during the study period.

PE options may alter requisites

By DEBBIE HOWLETT
Of the Emerald

State-mandated budget cuts may force radical changes in the University's physical education curriculum.

But department head Michael Ellis says the changes may be the best thing that could happen to the activities classes.

When the Legislature's House Ways and Means Committee voted last spring to suspend general funding for physical education activity classes, the department began to consider sacrificing part of its curriculum to balance its budget, Ellis says.

Part of the sacrifice under consideration is a proposal to eliminate physical education classes from the list of requirements for a baccalaureate degree.

Dropping the five-credit requirement would affect the entire student population.

Dropping the requirement would save the University \$141,000 says Provost Richard Hill. That savings could in turn save other programs at the University, Hill says.

Besides the proposal to drop physical education as a requirement, Ellis has some ideas to restructure the physical education program so more activity classes are available.

Ellis says he wants to install a plan that would function in a manner similar to Community Education classes. The classes would offer something for most of the students at a reasonable cost, he says.

An example he gives is a class such as "Improving your tennis serve." Ellis says it could be short, sweet and cheap. In other words, the class might be three hours in total time and cost four or five dollars.

Other activities would range from entire term courses, with credit, to seminars focusing on one subject. Ellis says this plan would allow for classes that are not currently offered.

Under this new arrangement, Ellis says, the department would function as a business, "similar to something like Court Sports."

This supply and demand arrangement would present a "much broader range for the students and place the power of shaping the program in the hands of the students," he says.

"Students are going to say, 'Oh! goody goody, we don't have to take P.E.,'" Ellis says, "but I believe this attitude is just a short term situation. In the long run, we'll have just as many students participating."

Offering evidence, Ellis says that in the early 1960s a snow storm hit Eugene that shut down the entire town. "They (dorm administrators) were begging us to open the facilities for the dorm students because (the students) were a holy terror over there in the dorms."

The resulting interaction between students, faculty and community members would benefit all of Eugene, he adds.

The department would also operate as a department of recreation for all phases of activities including intramurals, Ellis says.

Bogus term papers may not pay

By ANN PORTAL
Of the Emerald

University students who purchased "canned" term papers from a Seattle company may end up paying more than they expected.

A recent consent decree issued by U.S. District Court Judge John Voorhees in Seattle opens the door for prosecution by any academic institution requesting the names of students who purchased papers, according to one of Voorhees' clerks.

Penalties for convicted University students could range from changed grades to revoked degrees, according to Vern Barkhurst, associate dean of students and student conduct coordinator.

Will the University attempt to identify and prosecute current or former students?

"Yeah, I would think so," Barkhurst says.

Advertisements for Pacific Research term papers were abundant on campus last year.

Voorhees' decree gives legal backing to an agreement between the U.S. Postal Service and Pacific Research, the term-paper supplier.

According to the agreement, Pacific Research will turn over to any "academic institution or faculty member thereof" the names and addresses of students who purchase papers, the date purchased, and even a copy of the paper.

The decision to prosecute would be up to professors who received fake term papers, Barkhurst says, adding that the charge would be dishonesty. A formal or informal hearing would result.

English prof. Glen Love, chairer of the academic standards committee, says he thinks most professors would prosecute.

If one of his students has turned in a provably fake paper, Love says he will do whatever is necessary to at least revoke credit for that course.

However, the decree says only that Pacific Research must disclose information it has, Voorhees' clerk says. While the company now must keep detailed records, there is no indication in the agreement that such information was kept in the past.

Attempts to reach the Seattle firm by phone Monday were unsuccessful.

The Seattle decree comes on top of HB 2513, approved by the Legislature this year, which makes it illegal to sell or offer for sale bogus work for academic credit.

Love says the two actions take care of both ends of the fake term paper problem.

"I would imagine that would effectively end the term paper mill at the University," he says.