Spotlighting Grade Inflation in the CoB

Red Zone, Green Zone, Gray Zone: Grade Inflation Alert!

Investigators at USMPRIDE are pleased to introduce part I in a new mini-series that will run over the next few weeks. In this issue, "Red Zone, Green Zone, Gray Zone . . .," we use observations from ETS scores along with grading history data from the **A Look at pic*a*prof Grades** series available here at USMPRIDE to spotlight potential grade inflation in the CoB.

Grade Inflation Alert Levels

Various CoB faculty were recently queried about the academic skills of students majoring in the various fields in the CoB. This information was combined with observations from the ETS scores to come up with the following ranking of average academic quality across the students in various majors in business:

1. ACC
2. FIN/REI
3. IB
4. MKT
5. MGT
6. MIS

As can be seen above, no attempt is made to quantify the differences in the academic skills of students in the various CoB disciplines. We refer to average CoB student (in terms of academic quality) as "x," and posit that "x" lies between IB and MKT in the ranking above. Thus, ACC, FIN/REI and IB students are above average in academic skills, while MKT, MGT and MIS students are below average in academic skills.

One would think that the presence of grade inflation is most likely where above average grades are awarded to below average students. Grade inflation is least likely to be found where below average grades are awarded to above average students. We refer to the former situation as the Grade Inflation Red Zone, while the latter is referred to as the Grade Inflation Green Zone. The Gray Zone contains situations where below (above) average grades are awarded to below (above) average students. There is potential for grade inflation in the Gray Zone, though not likely as great as is the case with the Red Zone.

Using the coding system detailed above, the following CoB Grade Inflation Alert Levels are presented:

Grade Inflation Alert Levels

RED ZONE	High Likelihood of Encountering Grade Inflation
GRAY ZONE	Mod Likelihood of Encountering Grade Inflation
GREEN ZONE	Low Likelihood of Encountering Grade Inflation

These Alert Levels are used in the next section, wherein CoB course grades are introduced.

Simple Average of Course GPAs

Investigators analyzed grading in the CoB by calculating the simple average of course GPAs for each of the following CoB majors: ACC, FIN/REI, IB, MGT, MIS, and MKT. All courses above the principles level in the major areas are used in the calculations. For IB, the ECO courses beyond the principles level that are central to the IB curriculum are used. Table 1 below shows the simple average of course GPAs for each major area, along with the number of course sections that were used to calculate each simple average of course GPAs (grading data are taken from USMPRIDE's **A Look at picaprof Grades** series).

Table 1

Major Area	Simple Avg Course GPAs	#Course Sections
ACC	2.443	14
FIN/REI	2.532	5
IB	2.694	5
MGT	2.797	22
MIS	3.128	13
MKT	2.491	8
All CoB	2.724	67

The data in Table 1 above indicate that the simple average of course GPAs are lowest in ACC (2.443) and highest in MIS (3.128). The simple average of course GPAs for the CoB as a whole is 2.724. Thus, the averages of course GPAs in ACC, MKT,

FIN/REI, and IB are below the average of course GPAs for the whole CoB, while the opposite is true for MGT and MIS. This information is expressed, along with the ranking of average academic quality across students in various CoB majors, graphically in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

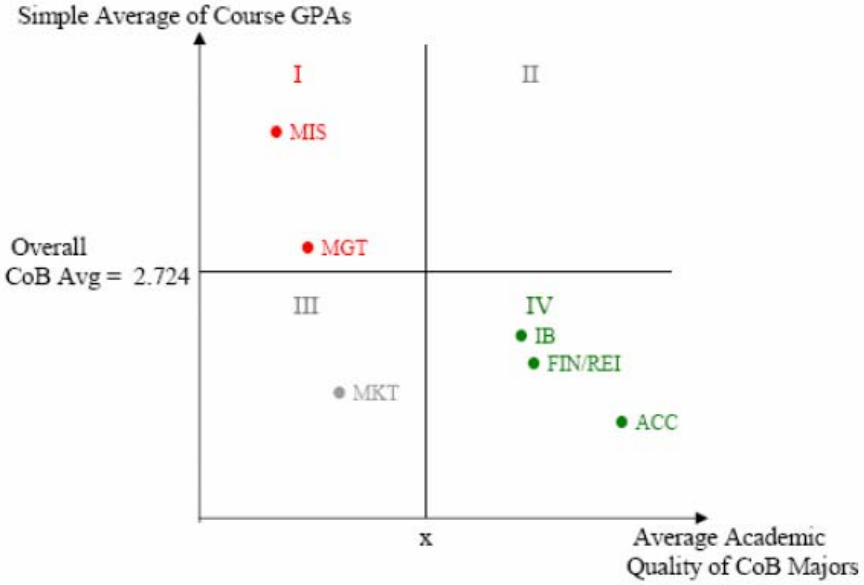

Figure 1 above shows that three CoB majors – ACC, FIN/REI, and IB – are Green Zone majors. Among these, grade inflation is least likely found in ACC. One CoB major, MKT, resides in the Gray Zone, wherein the likelihood of encountering grade inflation is classified as "moderate." Two majors – MGT and MIS – face high alert levels for encountering grade inflation, though the former falls only marginally inside the RED ZONE.

A special thanks goes to researchers at the University of Kentucky (and USMPRIDE sources) for introducing us to the approach used in this report to examine grade inflation in the CoB. The next issue in this mini-series will look at alternative ways of spotlighting grade inflation in the CoB.

Spotlighting Grade Inflation in the CoB

The Sources of Possible Grade Inflation in the CoB

In part II in this mini-series, we examine the grade inflation "zones" that were developed in the previous issue. We will go through the traditional business school units in the CoB alphabetically, beginning with ACC.

A Review of Issue #1

First, we review the average of the course GPAs (for courses above principles level) that were presented in issue I. These statistics, which are inserted below, were used to produce a graph indicating where grade inflation in the CoB is most likely to reside.

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The overall simple average of course GPAs in the CoB is 2.724, with simple averages in MGT and MIS (ACC, MKT, FIN/REI, and IB) lying above (below) that mark. Given the ranking of average academic quality across students in the CoB (see below), various probabilities of the existence of grade inflation were discussed in issue 1 of this mini-series.

> Various CoB faculty were recently queried about the academic skills of students majoring in the various fields in the CoB. This information was combined with observations from the ETS scores to come up with the following ranking of average academic quality across the students in various majors in business:

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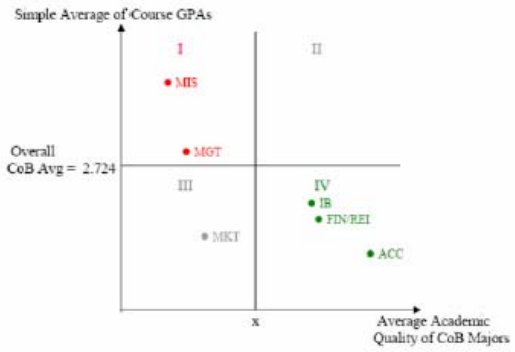
As can be seen above, no attempt is made to quantify the differences in the academic skills of students in the various CoB disciplines. We refer to average CoB student (in terms of academic quality) as "x," and posit that "x" lies between IB and MKT in the ranking above. Thus, ACC, FIN/REI and IB students are above average in academic skills, while MKT, MGT and MIS students are below average in academic skills.

The discussion of those probabilities is shown again below:

One would think that the presence of grade inflation is most likely where above average grades are awarded to below average students. Grade inflation is least likely to be found where below average grades are awarded to above average students. We refer to the former situation as the Grade Inflation Red Zone, while the latter is referred to as the Grade Inflation Green Zone. The Gray Zone contains situations where below (above) average grades are awarded to below (above) average students. There is potential for grade inflation in the Gray Zone, though not likely as great as is the case with the Red Zone.

The various "zones" discussed in the text above are shown below, with an indication of where each CoB academic unit resides.

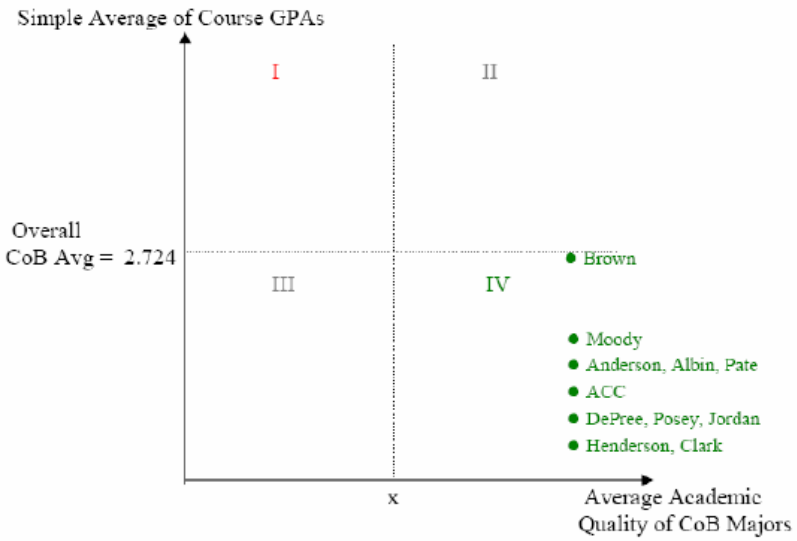
Figure 1



Given the figure above, grade inflation is least likely found in ACC, while most likely found in MIS.

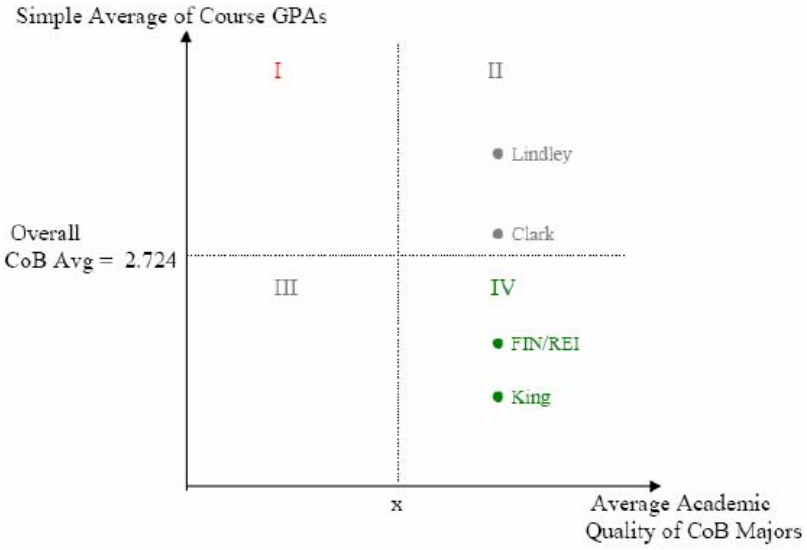
A Look at Grade Inflation in Individual Units

We begin our individual examination of grade inflation in various departments with ACC. Again we use the methodology described in the first installment in this new mini-series. A figure similar to the one above, but for ACC only, is presented below:

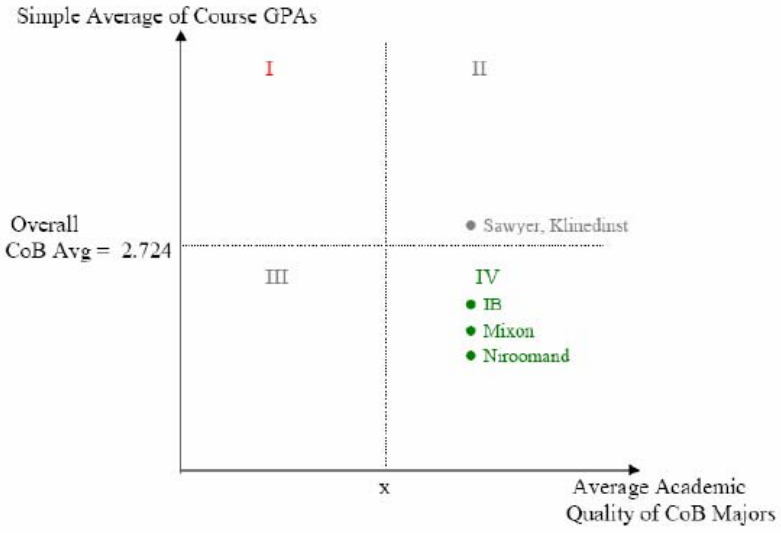


As indicated in the figure above, grade inflation is not likely to be a problem of any degree in ACC. All of the ACC faculty are Green Zone residents. Only Brown approaches the Gray Zone, yet does *not* actually reside there.

The FIN/REI grading histories show a low likelihood of grade inflation (Green Zone) for King, and a low likelihood for the unit overall. Lindley exhibits the greatest likelihood for grade inflation, though he and Clark reside in the Gray Zone. The counterpart figure for FIN/REI is shown below:

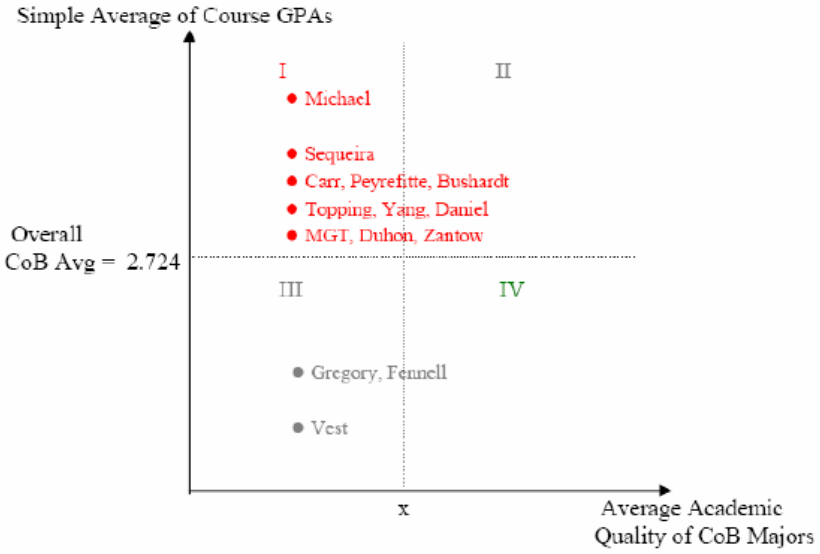


For IB, the figure below applies:



As shown above, the IB unit is a Green Zone unit, with both Niroomand and Mixon residing deeper in the Green Zone than the unit as a whole. On the other hand, both Sawyer and Klinedinst are Gray Zone faculty, though only barely so. Thus, the likelihood of grade inflation with any of the IB faculty is moderate at most.

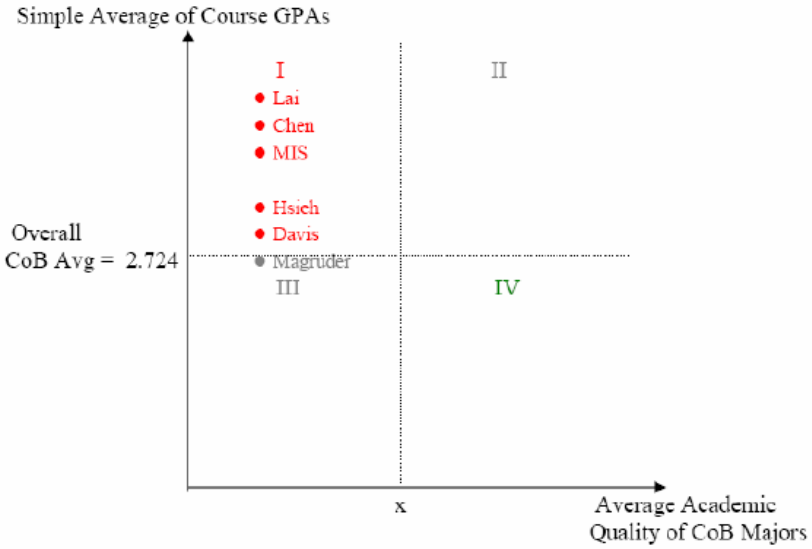
The situation in MGT is depicted below:



As the figure indicates, grade inflation may be a problem with a number of MGT faculty. Assistant Professor Michael represents the most likely case, with Duhon and Zantow residing just inside the Red Zone – a zone indicating a high probability of grade inflation.

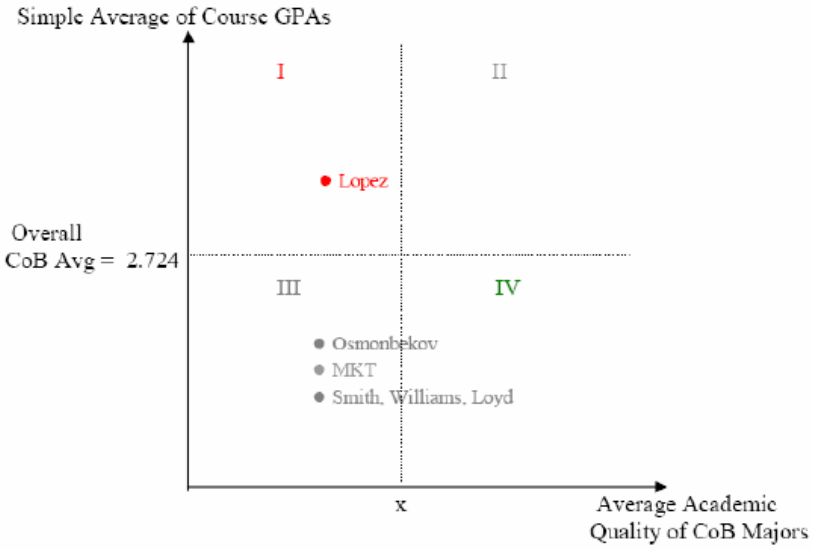
The incidence of grade inflation in courses taught by Gregory, Fennell, and Vest is much lower (these are Gray Zone residents). The case of Fennell confirms data in another USMPRIDE report ("What Management Professors Could Learn from the Instructors").

The MIS unit is arguably the capital of potential grade inflation in the CoB, as the figure below indicates:



As the figure above shows, the case of Lai is an extreme one, both for MIS and for the CoB as a whole. Chen's courses also exhibit a very high likelihood of inflated grades. Only courses taught by Magruder do *not* exhibit a high likelihood (Red Zone) of grade inflation. Magruder's history is inside the Gray Zone.

The figure below for the CoB's MKT unit indicates that grade inflation alert reaches only the moderate level. Assistant professor Smith, former chair Williams, and Loyd represent the strongest examples of "holding the line" on grades among this group of faculty. Again, Loyd's case confirms the earlier report comparing the MgtMkt instructors to that department's PhD personnel. Finally, the grading history of Lopez represents an example of a high likelihood (i.e., Red Zone) of grade inflation.



Once again, a special thanks goes to researchers at the University of Kentucky (and USMPRIDE sources) for introducing us to the approach used in this report to examine grade inflation in the CoB. The next issue in this mini-series will examine a grade inflation likelihood ranking for the CoB.

Spotlighting Grade Inflation in the CoB

Grade Inflation Watch Lists and GPA Management in MGT

In part III of this series our investigators have compiled a list of the top grade inflation suspects in the CoB. To arrive at our list we used the technique for isolating grade inflation that was explained in the first two issues in this mini-series. This issue, the final one in this mini-series, concludes with additional analysis of the effects of grade inflation in one of the Red Zone academic units.

Top Grade Inflation Candidates in the CoB

According to the data compiled by researchers, the top three candidates for grade inflation in the CoB are (listed alphabetically):

1. Kuo Lane Chen, MIS
2. Fujun Lai, MIS
3. Daniel Michael, MGT

Each of these three instructors is a Red Zone grader. In each case, the CumGPA is above both the CoB average GPA and that of the relevant CoB academic unit.

Making Use of Grade Inflation in Navigating Degree Plans

A recent grade histories report posted to this website contained CumGPA averages for professors in the MGT area. Portions of that report are shown below:

A Look at picaprof Grades in MGT (by Course)

Course	Professor	#Students	CumGPA
MGT 300	Gregory, B.	140	1.81
	Michael, D.	52	3.07
	Sevier, A.	396	2.19
MGT 325	Fennell, W.	301	2.08
	Yang, J.	23	2.86
MGT 364	Michael, D.	36	3.16
	Vest, M.	159	1.84
MGT 400	Carr, J.	44	3.00
	Duhon, D.	171	2.76
	Peyrefitte, J.	38	2.89
	Topping, S.	36	2.88
	Zantow, K.	28	2.64
MGT 454	Bushardt, S.	26	3.11
	Gregory, B.	52	2.30
	Michael, D.	28	3.42

MGT 455	Zantow, K.	29	2.89
MGT 465	Fennell, W.	44	2.52
	Yang, J.	13	2.84
MGT 468	Vest, M.	13	2.23
MGT 475	Carr, J.	52	2.96
	Sequeira, J.	102	3.03
MGT 480	Bushardt, S.	27	3.00
	Daniel, F.	20	2.85
MGT 482	Sequeira, J.	28	3.17
MGT 495	Peyrefitte, J.	30	3.10

As our investigators examined these data above, it became evident that MGT majors have a lot of room to "navigate" the MGT curriculum in a way that provides them with an opportunity to graduate with a healthy in-major GPA. For example, the average performance in Vest's MGT 364 course is a 1.84 GPA. However, an alternative to Vest for completing this course is Michael, and the average performance with Michael is a 3.16 – much better than in Vest's sections. Thus, Micheal provides MGT majors with an escape hatch of sorts, or a safe place to go to complete MGT 364. And, this scenario occurs frequently within the MGT course menu/portfolio (see insert above for other cases of this sort).

Let's consider the following example, wherein two hypothetical MGT majors complete the entire upper level MGT course sequence along different routes. In this example, each student earns the average grade awarded by his/her chosen instructor for each course in the sequence.

	Student A			**Student B**	
Course	**Instructor**	**Grade**	**Course**	**Instructor**	**Grade**
MGT 325	Fennell	2.08	MGT 325	Yang	2.86
MGT 365	Vest	1.84	MGT 365	Michael	3.16
MGT 400	Zantow	2.64	MGT 400	Carr	3.00
MGT 454	Gregory	2.30	MGT 454	Michael	3.42
MGT 455	Zantow	2.89	MGT 455	Zantow	2.89
MGT 465	Fennell	2.52	MGT 465	Yang	2.84
MGT 468	Vest	2.23	MGT 468	Vest	2.23
MGT 475	Carr	2.96	MGT 475	Sequeira	3.03
MGT 480	Daniel	2.85	MGT 480	Bushardt	3.00
MGT 482	Sequeira	3.17	MGT 482	Sequeira	3.17
MGT 495	Peyrefitte	3.10	MGT 495	Peyrefitte	3.10

In our example above, Student A chooses the "hardest grader" available for each particular course, while Student B signs on for the "easiest grader." In doing so, Student A signs up to face five Gray Zone MGT faculty and six Red Zone MGT faculty, while

Student B signs up to face only one Gray Zone MGT faculty and 10 Red Zone MGT faculty.

Student A's MGT grade point average comes to a 2.598, well within the Gray Zone using overall CoB average GPAs. Student B, on the other hand, is able to navigate his/her way to a MGT grade point average of 2.973, or well inside the CoB Red Zone. Of course, our example is extreme in that each student completes the entire sequence of upper-level MGT courses. Several subset options for Student B – a student who earns the average grade (by professor) in each course -- allow him/her to graduate from the CoB with a MGT GPA that is above a 3.00. Thus, the first thing CoB management majors learn how to manage is their own GPAs.