

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.

Table 1

<u>Major Area</u>	<u>Simple Avg Course GPAs</u>	<u>#Course Sections</u>
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 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:

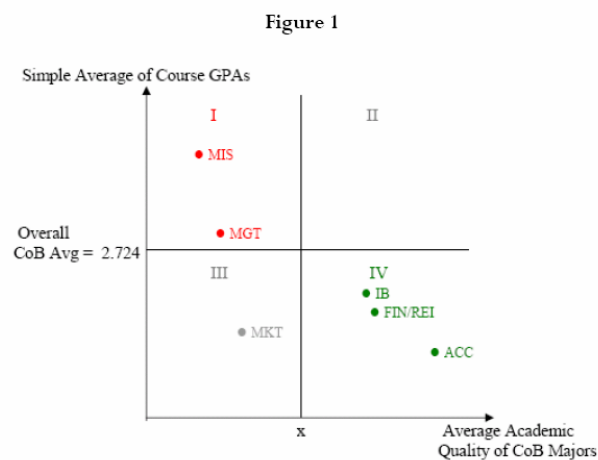
1. ACC
2. FIN/REI
3. IB
4. MKT
5. MGT
6. MIS

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.

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**.

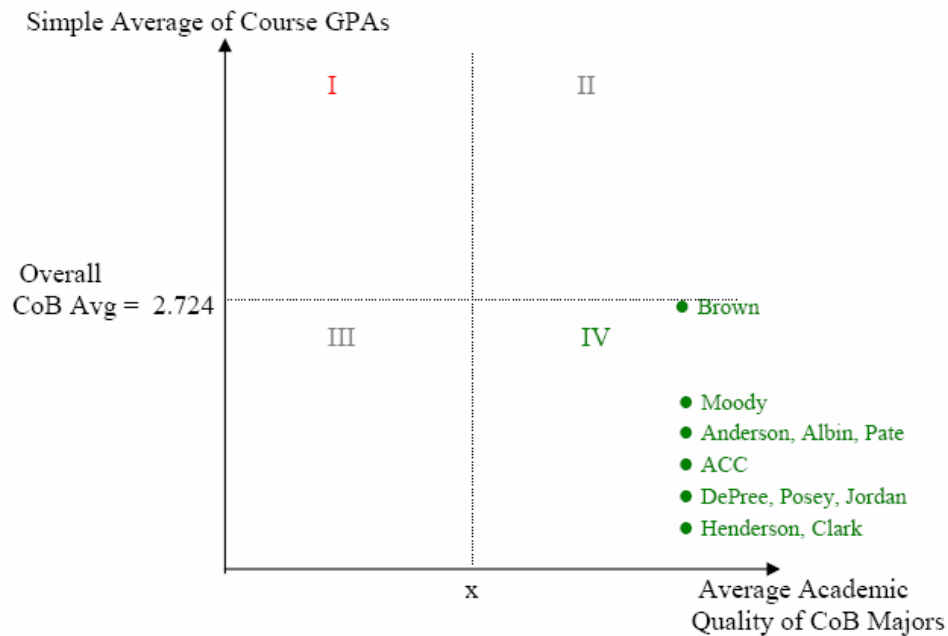
The various “zones” discussed in the text above are shown below, with an indication of where each CoB academic unit resides.



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

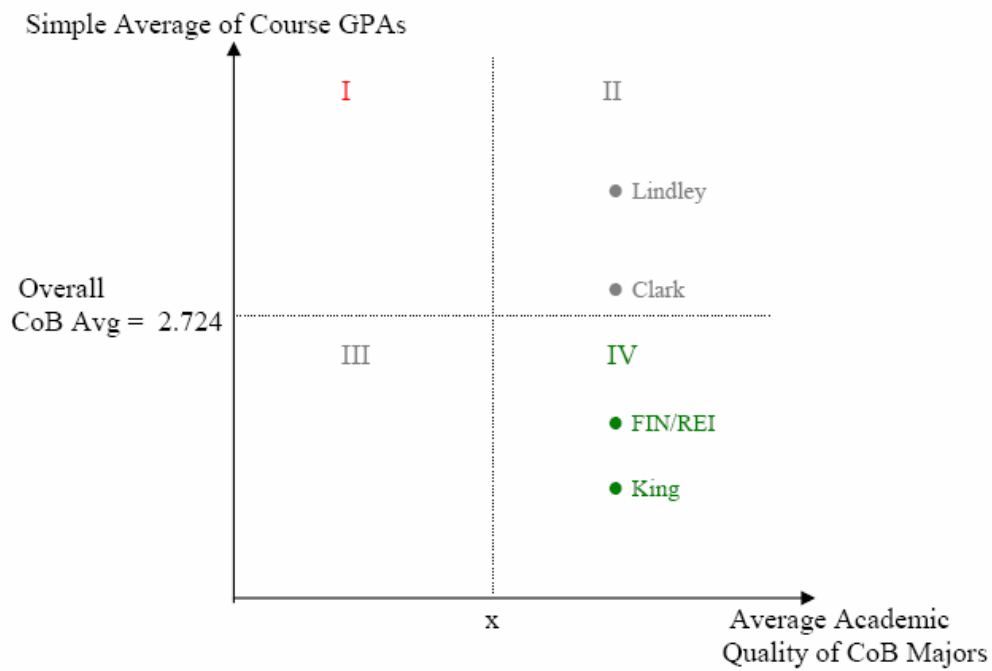
A Look at Grade Inflation in Individual Units

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:

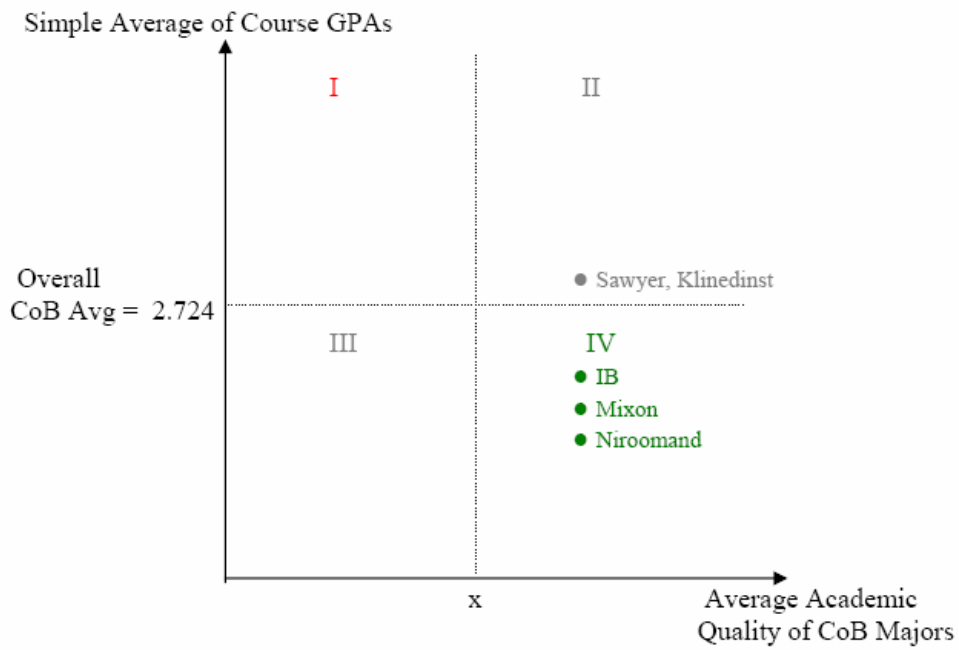


As indicated in the figure above, grade inflation is not likely to be a problem of any degree in ACC. All of the ACC faculty are **Green Zone** residents. Only Brown approaches the **Gray Zone**, yet does *not* actually reside there.

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:

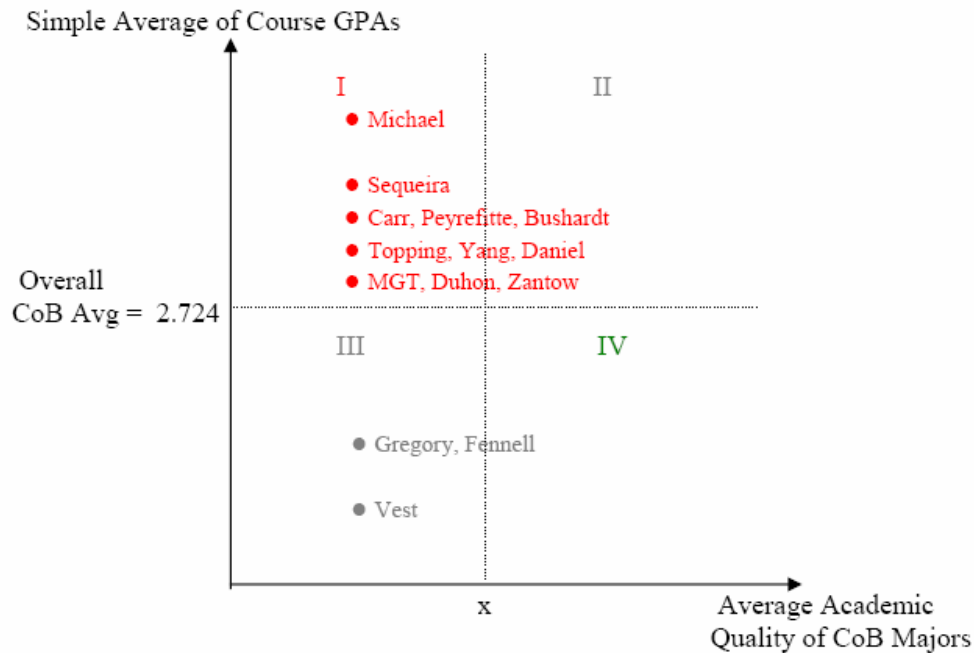


For IB, the figure below applies:



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.

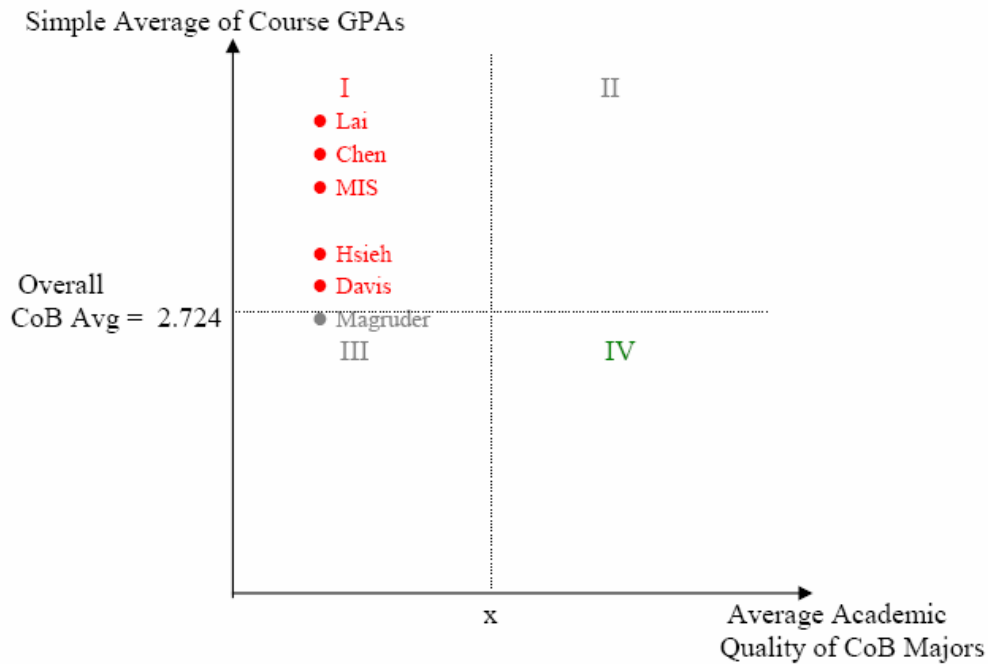
The situation in MGT is depicted below:



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.

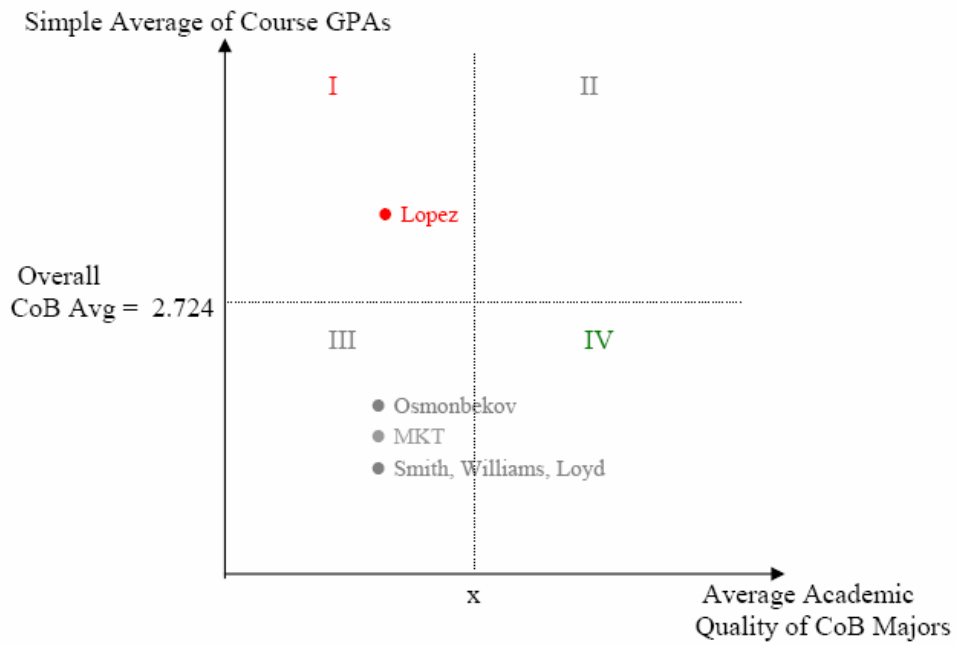
The incidence of grade inflation in courses taught by Gregory, Fennell, and Vest is much lower (these are **Gray Zone** residents). The case of Fennell confirms data in another USMPRIDE report (“What Management Professors Could Learn from the Instructors”).

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.