

**Presentation to the Council of Princeton University Community**  
**September 24, 2018**  
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**Dean of the College**

**Grading Trends**  
**in Undergraduate Education,**  
**2004 – 2018**

# Grading policy

## adopted by the faculty in April 2004:

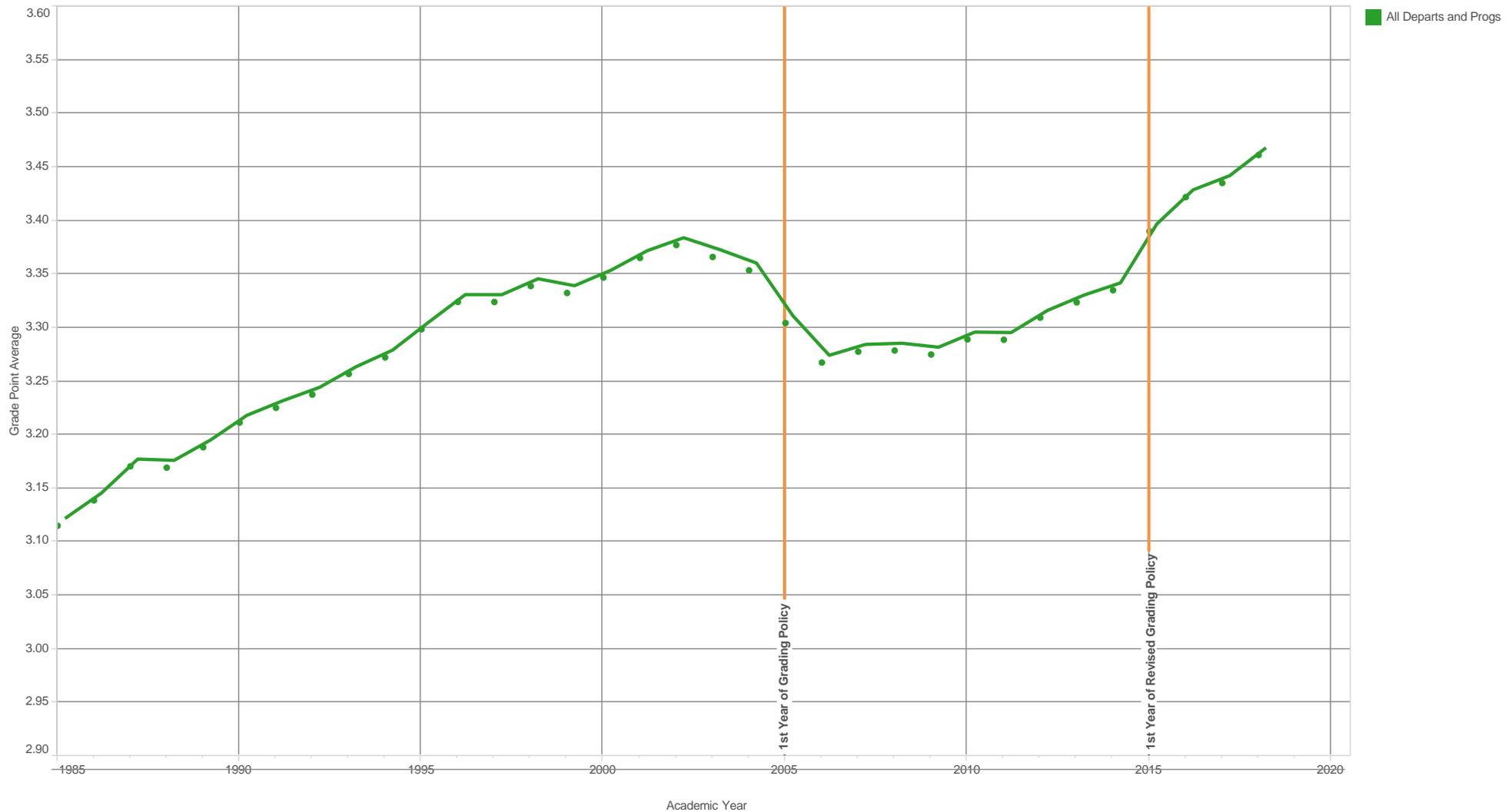
- Impose a common grading expectation for every department and program.
- A's (A+, A, A-) should account for less than 35% of the grades given in 100-400 level undergraduate courses.
- Grading across departments is held to similar performance standards.
- Students deserve clear signals differentiating between excellent and “very good” work.
- Grade inflation and compression make differentiation difficult.

# Revised grading policy, adopted by the faculty in October 2014:

- Removed the common numeric target for 35% A grades.
- Charged departments to develop and articulate assessment measures and grading standards.
- Reaffirmed a commitment to fairness and transparency in assessment.
- Emphasized well-defined evaluative criteria and meaningful feedback.
- Departments asked to publish grading standards and encourage faculty discussion about meaningful grading and assessment practices.
- Faculty Committee on Examinations and Standing to periodically review grading standards and report to the faculty every fall on the previous year's grading trends.

# The grade point average for AY 2017-18 is .107 higher than it was in AY 2003-04 and .071 higher than it was in AY 2014-15

Academic Years: 1985-2018  
Grade Point Average  
All Departments and Programs  
100-400 Level Courses



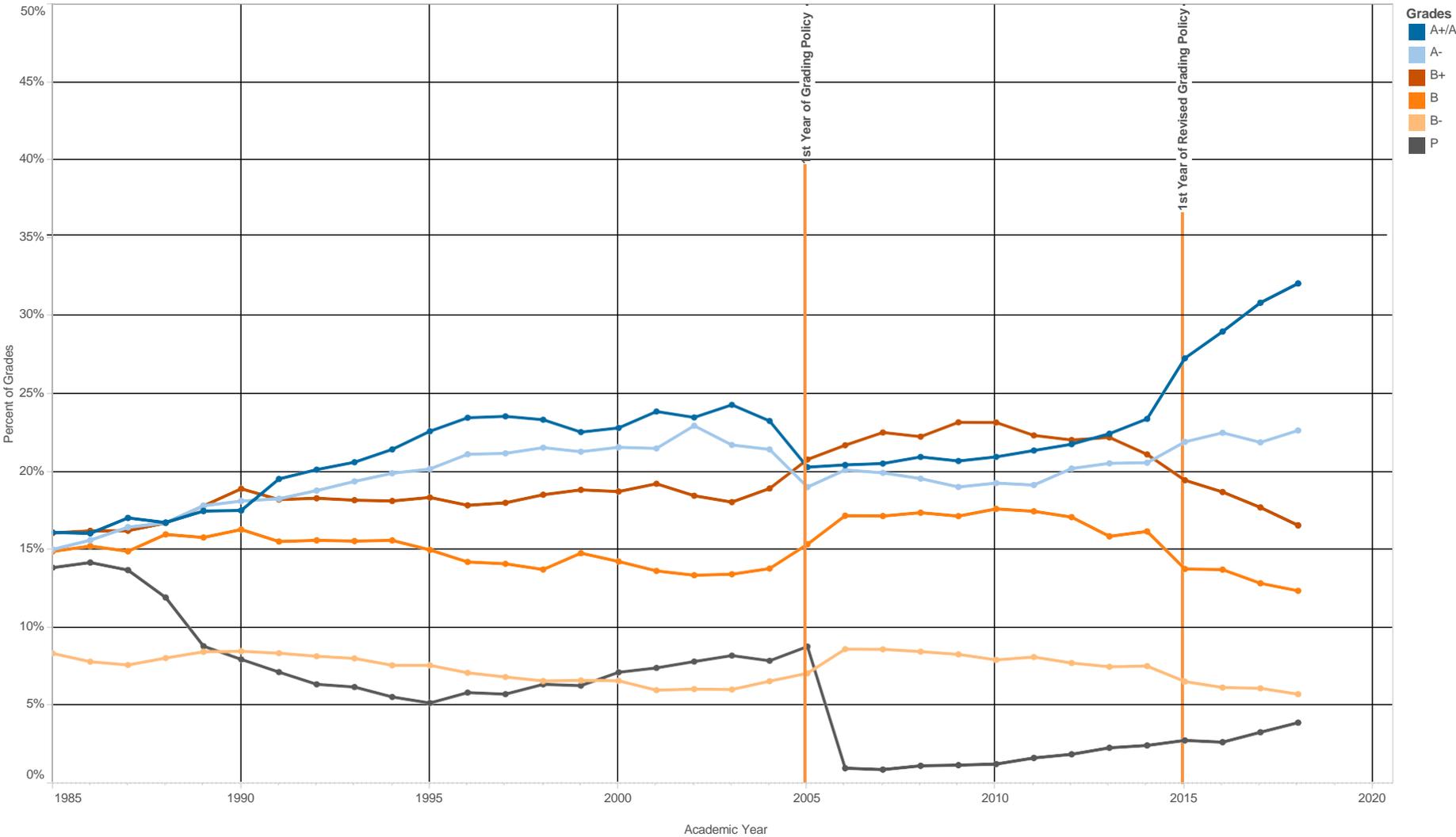
**Notes:**

Uncovered grades are included in this report. An uncovered grade is defined as the actual letter grade the faculty member assigned to the student, not the Official Grade. For example: If a student received a letter grade of 'B' and elected to take a course Pass/Fail, this report uses the letter grade of 'B' in its statistical analysis.

Statistics are compiled using all uncovered undergraduate grades and enrollments for undergraduate-level courses during the fall and spring semesters within the listed academic department or program. Only courses with a catalog number between 100 and 499 are included. Auditors are excluded. Graduate students are excluded. All courses with a catalog number greater than or equal to 500 are excluded. Engineering independent work is excluded.

# The most significant shift since 2014 has been an increase in A grades and a proportional decrease in B+ grades

Academic Years: 1985-2018  
 Distribution of A-Range , B-Range, and P-Grades  
 All Departments & Programs  
 100-400 Level Courses

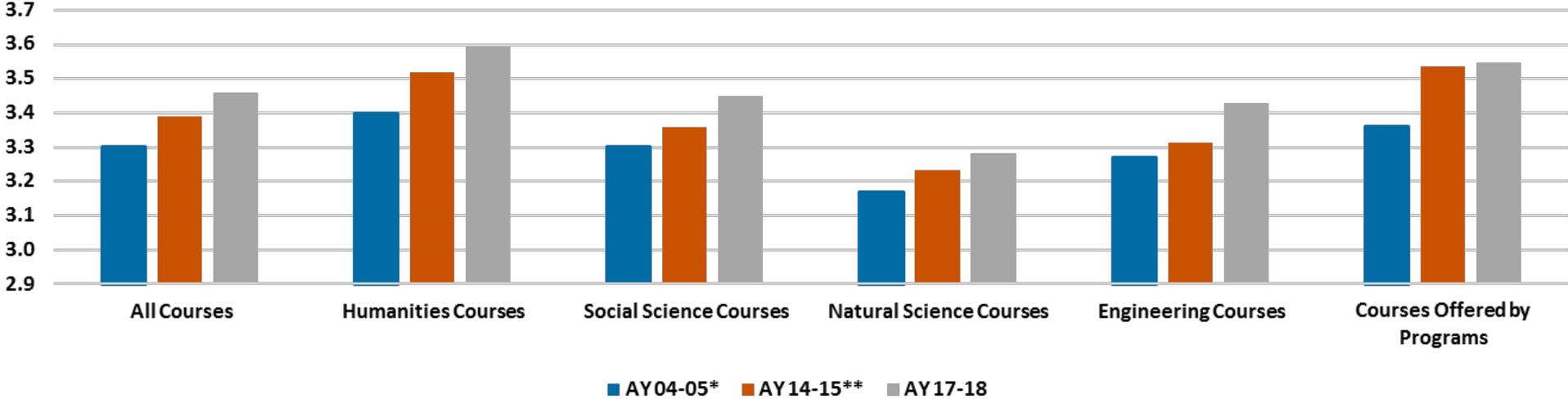


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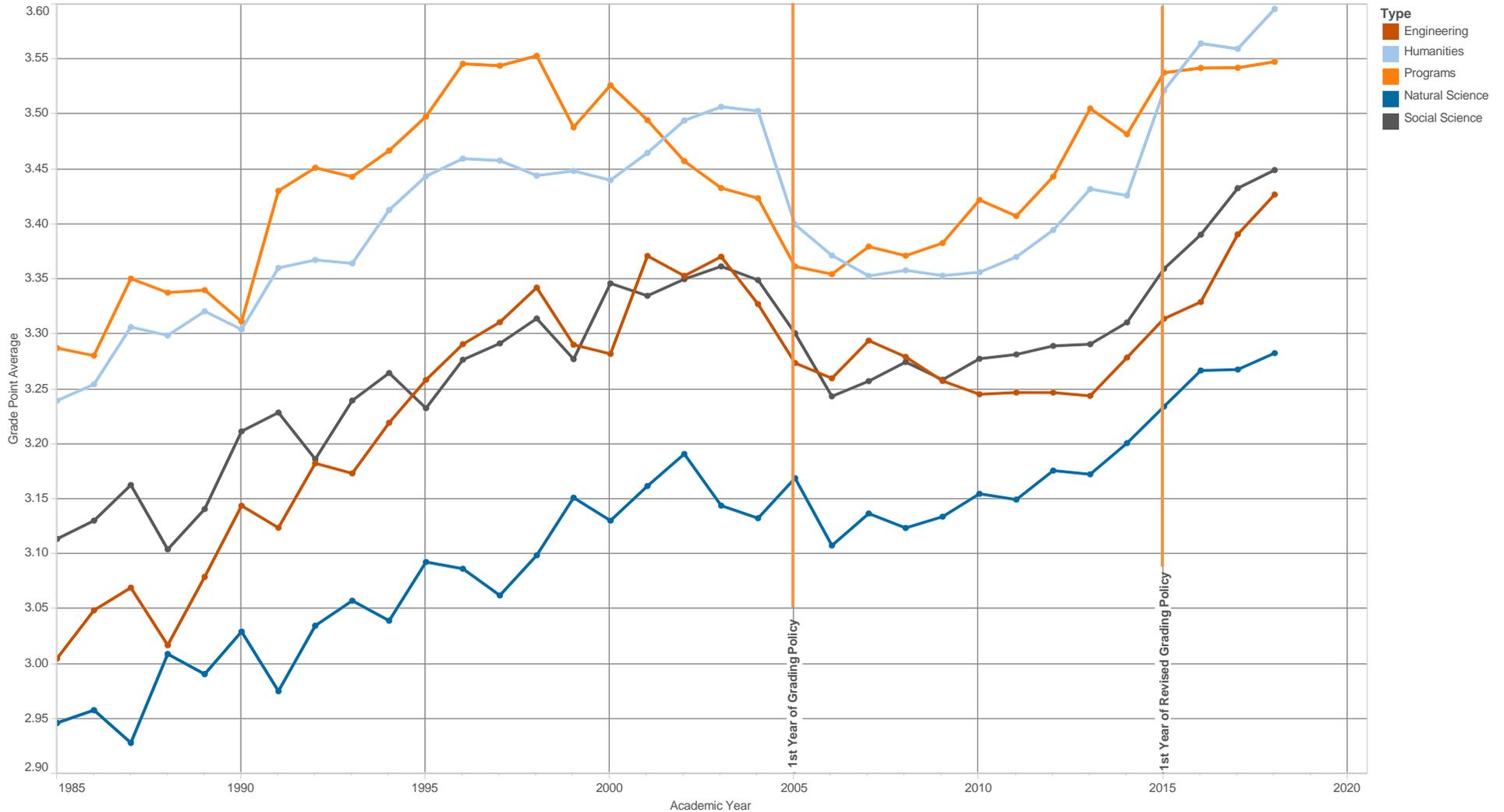
# GPA has increased across all divisions

Grade Point Average for AY 04-05; AY 14-15; AY 17-18  
100-400 Level Courses



# Engineering and Humanities courses experienced the greatest GPA increase in AY 2017-18

Academic Years: 1985-2018  
Grade Point Average in 100-400 Level Courses by Division



**Notes:**

Beginning with Academic Year 2016-17, some subject areas changed division.

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**The AY 2017-18 report offered additional observations about grading and assessment challenges:**

- The increase in A grades has caused compression at the top of the class.
- It's challenging to differentiate among our highest performing students when awarding departmental honors and prizes.

# Increased requests for grade changes . . .

## Why?

- Has grading autonomy opened faculty to student pressure to change grades?
- Are faculty insufficiently clear about grading standards and assessment?

Why should we care about grading?

How might we honor  
the 2014 grading policy's  
commitment to fairness  
and transparency  
in assessment  
and grading practices?

# Resources

## For students:

- Residential College Deans and Directors of Studies
- Departmental Representatives
- McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning

## For faculty:

- McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning
- Residential College Deans and Directors of Studies
- Office of the Dean of the College

**Please keep the conversation active  
and engaged.**

**Questions?**

Thank you