

HUNTER COLLEGE READING/WRITING CENTER
WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: The CPE Examination
Sample Descriptive Outline 2

The following is an outline of the organization and main ideas in Brent Staples' "Why Colleges Shower Students with A's."

Thesis: Colleges are handing out higher grades in response to demand from student-consumers.

I. Causes of grade inflation

- A. High grades "sell" poorly-attended classes to more students.
- B. Administrators insist on providing high grades in order to retain student-consumers.
- C. Negative evaluations by students affect professors' positions and salaries.

II. Problems created when students are seen as consumers

- A. Profit-oriented colleges such as the University of Phoenix compete with traditional colleges for students.
- B. Students in debt for college loans need high grades to ensure future employment.
- C. More permissive grade appeal processes than in the past undermine the authority of teachers.

III. Solution considered

- A. Give more weight to harder courses in calculating GPA..
- B. Remove advantages of taking easy courses.
- C. Problem: Students and faculty who benefit from status quo resist attempts to change it.

Conclusion: College degrees are losing their value