

orchard ridge campus

INSTITUTIONAL
REPORTS

ANALYSIS OF GRADES, 1969-1974

Stuart-Nichols Study

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ORCHARD RIDGE CAMPUS

GRADE ANALYSIS

1969 - 1974

Prepared by William Stuart and Donald Nichols

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INTRODUCTION

The Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College opened its doors in September 1967 and implemented the audio-tutorial instructional system for the first two academic years. In 1969, under the direction of its new president, the College shifted emphasis to a philosophy of personalized instruction where various teaching strategies are utilized.

Since the shift in teaching strategies did take place college wide, this study of the grading system and grades issued at Orchard Ridge will include the years 1967 through 1969 for the record.

The academic year at Oakland Community College and its four campus service areas consists of a trimester system with two 15 week sessions in the Fall and Winter and the third session divided into two 7 1/2 week sessions in the Spring and Summer.

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system of Oakland Community College has seen few changes since its introduction in 1965. The faculty initiated grades "A", "B", "C", "D", "F", and "I" have remained constant, while the marks (student or faculty initiated withdrawals) have been altered both in length of time to be used and the type of withdrawal policy.

From 1965 through 1969 the student could elect to withdraw from a course with a "W" prior to the seventh week of classes without penalty. After this period the student formally withdrawing from classes would receive a "WP" or "WF" depending on his or her status in the class.

Beginning with the 1969-70 college year, the "W" mark was extended to eight weeks and the "WP" and "WF" marks were replaced by the "X" mark, which was a faculty initiated mark to be given from the eighth week until the final examination period, primarily if the student had not been attending class, and the "X" would mean "no credit".

The use of the "W" mark by students for withdrawal was extended in the 1973-74 college year to thirteen weeks with the "X" mark to be issued prior to the final examination period.

A description of the present grading system is as follows:

GRADING SYSTEM

All students will be awarded letter grades for course work as follows:

A – Outstanding	4 honor points
B – Superior	3 honor points
C – Average	2 honor points
D – Passing, below average	1 honor point
F – Failure	0 honor points
I – Incomplete*	(see footnote)

*This grade will be used sparingly and only when an emergency prevents a student from completing course work during the regular college session. It is the student's responsibility to arrange with his instructor for the completion of incomplete grades. He is not to re-register for the course while carrying an incomplete (I).

MARKS

"W" – WITHDRAWAL

A student may formally withdraw from a course without penalty during the first thirteen weeks or a full semester (sixth week of a short session). A mark of "W" will appear on the transcript for the courses.

"X" – FACULTY INITIATED WITHDRAWAL

A mark of "X" may be assigned with or without student consultation if a student does not attend the class and section for which he is registered. This mark will be interpreted to mean "no credit." If a student wishes to receive credit for a course in which he has received an "X" he must re-register for the course.

TOTAL GRADES

The distribution of grades and marks for the Campus (Table I) during the years 1969-74 clearly show a couple of significant trends.

Taking into consideration that the percentage of passing grades (A, B, C, D) to all of the grades and marks has stayed quite constant (68%) and add that the amount of total grades has been quite steady, any percentage change under 5% can be treated as not very significant. There is a 3% change or less in the following grades and marks: B, D, F, I, W, X, and AU. Even when considered as raw numerical data, the amount of grades and marks do not cause appreciable differences.

The greatest changes in grading patterns have occurred in the A and C grades. The A grade has increased in percentage of total grades issued at 3-5% yearly and 15% in the last 5 years. On the other hand, the C grade has decreased in percentage of total grades issued by 10% over the same period of time.

It can be inferred that since the B grade has remained fairly constant in this span of time, the grading pattern has tended to shift steadily to one in which approximately one half of the students who received C grades in 1969 are now considered B students and one half of the B students are now in the A category.

Considering the same data for the college as a whole, the same set of conclusions can be inferred.

PASSING GRADES

When the passing grades (A, B, C, and D) are extracted from all the grades and marks (Table II), there is dramatic evidence of the shift to the A grade as a consistent pattern from 1969-74. Since the total passing figures for each year do not deviate significantly from the average of 29,900 grades per year, it can be inferred that there is consistency and that the use of percentages for different years meets that consistency.

There is an increase of 22% in the A grades issued over the five year period and with an approximate 5-7% increase each year. The B, C, and D grades decreased, the largest occurring in the C grade.

NON-PASSING GRADES and MARKS

We must differentiate between the permanent non-passing grades and marks and the temporary mark. The I, or incomplete mark is given to the student who, for a variety of acceptable reasons, has not been able to complete a portion of the course requirements and has intentions of doing so in a subsequent session. When completed the mark will then be changed to a grade based on the level of performance. Ninety percent of all I's do become passing grades.

Therefore, approximately 24% of the total grades issued should be considered non-passing grades and marks. The F grade is infrequently issued especially now that a student may choose to receive a withdrawl mark (W) or not attend class and allow the faculty member to issue the X mark.

Although the data on high school standing shows an increase of students in the upper quartile, it is apparent that the campus has not seen a reduction in the percentages of non-passing grades and marks. It may be necessary to place greater emphasis on remediation for those students who habitually have difficulty in assimilating the content material in courses taken.

THE OVERALL CAMPUS GRADE POINT AVERAGE

The Grade Point Average (GPA) is a traditional indicator of a student's overall academic success rate. Honors are bestowed on those students who have accumulated a 4.0 or (A) GPA, a 3.75 or (B+) GPA; approval for graduation is based on completion of a minimum amount of courses at a 2.0 or (C) GPA or better. Transfer institutions require a minimum GPA entry level and employers may advertise a position with a minimum GPA attached.

The GPA is established by multiplying the credits for each course completed by the honor points designated for each letter grade. For example, a student receiving an A grade in a three-credit course would garner a GPA of 4.0. Adding together all of the accumulated honor points and dividing by the total credits generated the overall GPA.

In compiling the Campus and College GPA's for a given academic year, it was not possible to separate the total number of grades into one, two, three, four or more credit hour categories; but there are accurate data which show the average credit hour course to be 3.2 credit hours. Instead of multiplying the number of A grades in a given year by 3.2 and then by 4 as the honor point, we simply treated all of the grades as 1 credit hour courses and multiplied by the honor point assigned and then totaled this Group (TPP) and divided by the total grades issued (TG). This provided the overall GPA by Campus and for the College. The total number of final grades issued is contained in Table V.

There has been a .48 increase in the overall Campus GPA from 1969-70 to 1973-74, or a one-half grade difference. While the GPA each year has risen less than in each preceding year, it has shown a steady movement from 2.74 (C+) to 3.22 (B+). The Orchard Ridge Campus GPA's have increased at a more rapid rate than the College as a whole, the latter having risen .37 in five years. The 3.22 GPA means that collectively the approximately 6000 students at Orchard Ridge are being awarded grades that average B or better for courses completed.

Indicators nationally show the trend to higher GPA's among institutions of higher learning and various reasons to account for this phenomenon include: conditions surrounding the Vietnam period and draft laws; emphasis on the culturally deprived, minorities and women; and emphasis on the diploma as entry to success by increasing numbers of students.

Community Colleges with an open door concept to higher education can add further to the list of possible reasons for the change in GPA. Oakland Community College has had a decided change in the composition of its student population since 1967, e.g., the average age of entering students (19 in 1967 to 27 in 1974); the sex ratio (31% female in 1967 to 50% in 1974); part-time students (30% in 1967 to 65% in 1974); and the academic capabilities of entering students (11% of the upper quarter of high school rank in 1967 to 19% in 1974). Other factors such as the maturing of an institution, increased motivation on the part of students, recognition of different cognitive and teaching styles and the general trend to less punitive grading practices have had some impact on the success patterns of students.

DEPARTMENTAL GRADES

Further delineation of the reasons for the shift in passing grades can be seen in both numerical and percentages changes in departmental grading using comparisons from the Fall 1969 and Fall 1974 sessions. One academic department, Physical Education, is not included in this study because of a normal preponderance of A grades in activity courses such as sailing, skiing, bowling, tennis, and golf.

When the departments are treated as an entire group and are placed on a percentage scale, the low and high scores for A grades are 11 and 31 respectively in 1969 and 29 and 60 respectively in 1974. The B grades have stayed relatively constant with a 27-42 span in 1969 to 8-32 in 1974 (Table IV).

Departments comprising the Social Sciences have seen a 23% decrease in students from 1969 to 1974, but in increase of 52% in A grades. These include Economics and Political Science, History, Psychology, Social Science, and Sociology. The Psychology Department, studied alone has been quite stable with the increase of students and A grades with a 30% percentage in both cases.

Departments comprising the Sciences, Biology and Physical Science, have felt a 9% decrease in students, while at the same time a 70% increase in A grades.

Departments comprising most of the vocational career programs, Business Administration and Business Education, have incurred a 54% increase in students and a 380% increase in A grades.

SUMMARY

This study is visible proof that Orchard Ridge Campus and Oakland Community College has had a dramatic shift to higher grades over the last five years. While the percentage of passing grades has stayed relatively stable at 68% of the total grades issued, the D grade is virtually nonexistent, a percentage of the C grade has moved to B grades and the same percentage of B grades to the A grades.

The Grade Point Average has risen by approximately one-half of a grade to 3.2 since 1969.

All academic departments, save one, have seen an increase in A grades from a minimum of 17 percentage points to a maximum of 37 points.

This trend parallels recent state and national studies of grades and entrance scores.

TABLE I
ORCHARD RIDGE CAMPUS
AND
OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PERCENTAGE OF GRADE ANALYSIS F67 - U74

YEAR	TOTAL GRADES	A%	B%	C%	D%	F%	I%	W%	X%	AU%	WP%	WF%	PERCENT OF TOTAL PASSING & GRADES	
1967-68	Campus	22,341	14	18	22	9	11	3	15	--	.2	4	.2	64%
	College	48,877	13	19	22	9	12	8	13	--	.2	4	.1	63%
1968-69	Campus	34,901	13	17	22	9	9	8	16	--	.3	5	.2	61%
	College	67,384	13	18	20	8	9	12	15	--	.2	4	.1	59%
1969-70	Campus	43,055	19	23	22	5	2	6	9	14	.03	--	--	69%
	College	86,758	21	24	20	5	2	8	8	12	.04	--	--	70%
1970-71	Campus	48,833	24	24	17	4	2	7	12	12	.04	--	--	68%
	College	101,304	25	25	17	4	2	8	10	11	.04	--	--	70%
1971-72	Campus	45,394	27	23	14	3	1	8	12	12	.06	--	--	67%
	College	93,725	28	24	15	3	1	9	10	10	.05	--	--	70%
1972-73	Campus	40,419	30	22	13	3	1	7	12	12	.2	--	--	68%
	College	89,490	30	23	14	3	1	9	10	10	.1	--	--	70%
1973-74	Campus	41,734	34	20	12	2	1	7	12	12	.3	--	--	68%
	College	90,188	33	23	13	2	1	6	11	11	.2	--	--	71%
1967-74	Campus	273,425	24	22	17	5	3	7	12	10	.2	1	.2	67%
	College	577,764	24	23	17	4	3	8	11	8	.1	1	.1	68%
1969-74	Campus	219,435	27	22	16	4	1	7	11	12	.1	--	--	68%
	College	461,465	27	24	16	3	1	8	10	11	.1	--	--	70%

TABLE II
 ORCHARD RIDGE CAMPUS
 AND
 OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
 COMPARISON OF TOTAL GRADES AND
 PASSING GRADES ISSUED

YEAR	TOTAL PASSING	A%	B%	C%	D%	TOTAL NON- PASSING	F%	I%	W%	X%	AU%	WP%	WF%
1967-68 Campus College	14,219	22	29	35	15	8,122	30	8	40	--	.6	12	3
	30,590	21	30	35	14	18,287	31	22	35	--	.4	9	2
1968-69 Campus College	21,286	21	28	36	15	13,615	23	20	41	--	.9	13	2
	40,039	23	31	34	13	27,345	22	29	36	--	.5	11	2
1969-70 Campus College	29,858	28	33	32	8	13,197	5	19	29	46	.1	--	--
	60,394	30	35	29	7	26,364	6	28	26	40	.1	--	--
1970-71 Campus College	33,286	35	35	25	5	15,547	5	21	36	38	.1	--	--
	71,088	35	36	24	5	30,216	5	27	33	35	.1	--	--
1971-72 Campus College	30,363	40	34	21	5	15,031	3	23	38	36	.2	--	--
	65,305	41	34	21	4	28,426	3	28	34	34	.2	--	--
1972-73 Campus College	27,589	45	32	19	7	12,830	3	23	36	38	.6	--	--
	62,356	43	34	20	4	27,134	4	28	33	34	.4	--	--
1973-74 Campus College	28,410	50	30	17	3	13,324	3	22	37	37	.9	--	--
	64,019	47	32	18	3	26,169	4	22	36	38	.6	--	--
1967-74 Campus College	182,311	36	32	26	7	91,114	9	20	37	30	.5	-3	.5
	393,791	36	34	24	6	183,973	22	58	33	27	.3	3	.5
1969-74 Campus College	149,506	39	33	23	5	69,929	4	22	35	39	.3	--	--
	323,162	39	34	22	5	138,303	5	26	33	36	.3	--	--

TABLE III

GRADE POINT AVERAGE ANALYSIS
1969-70 TO 1973-74
ORCHARD RIDGE CAMPUS

	A Grade(1)	B Grade(2)	C Grade(3)	D Grade(4)	F Grade(5)	TPP(6)	TG(7)	GPA(8)
1969-70	33328	29220	18964	2304	721	83816	30579	2.74
1970-71	46664	34479	16626	1814	719	99583	34005	2.91
1971-72	48868	30668	12808	1519	423	93863	30786	3.01
1972-73	49284	26607	10650	1074	382	87615	27971	3.14
1973-74	56300	25545	9698	971	343	92514	28753	3.21

OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

1969-70	71580	63144	34840	4031	1642	173595	62036	2.81
1973-74	119096	61299	23358	2133	979	205886	64998	3.11

(1) grade total equals all A grades issued multiplied by 4 points

(2) grade total equals all B grades issued multiplied by 3 points

(3) grade total equals all C grades issued multiplied by 2 points

(4) grade total equals all D grades issued multiplied by 1 point

(5) grade total equals all F grades issued multiplied by 0 points

(6) is the total points possible by adding (1), (2), (3) and (4)

(7) is the total of all grades issued including F grades

(8) is the Grade Point Average dividing TPP by TG

TABLE IV
 COMPARISON OF FALL SESSION 1969 AND FALL SESSION
 1974 PASSING GRADES BY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS
 ORCHARD RIDGE CAMPUS

<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>A%</u>	<u>B%</u>	<u>C%</u>	<u>D%</u>
Biology	1969	(640)	14 (91)	41 (266)	33 (213)	12 (70)
	1974	(517)	32 (165)	30 (160)	28 (143)	10 (49)
Business Admin.	1969	(1186)	15 (176)	31 (373)	39 (462)	15 (175)
	1974	(1708)	36 (608)	34 (577)	23 (400)	7 (123)
Business Ed.	1969	(163)	11 (30)	29 (48)	36 (59)	16 (26)
	1974	(378)	46 (172)	40 (150)	12 (48)	2 (8)
Econ. Pol. Sci.	1969	(952)	14 (130)	30 (290)	46 (440)	9 (92)
	1974	(1008)	42 (419)	38 (381)	18 (186)	2 (22)
English	1969	(2170)	16 (341)	35 (753)	42 (906)	8 (170)
	1974	(1548)	51 (785)	35 (543)	13 (205)	1 (15)
FL, S & T	1969	(382)	31 (120)	42 (160)	23 (87)	4 (15)
	1974	(419)	56 (230)	37 (152)	8 (34)	1 (3)
History	1969	(869)	23 (203)	34 (294)	32 (276)	11 (96)
	1974	(529)	60 (320)	28 (146)	11 (60)	1 (3)
Humanities	1969	(1169)	31 (361)	33 (391)	29 (336)	7 (81)
	1974	(1820)	52 (947)	33 (596)	12 (220)	3 (57)
Math	1969	(546)	11 (63)	27 (148)	37 (201)	25 (134)
	1974	(619)	29 (181)	33 (203)	29 (182)	9 (53)
Phys. Science	1969	(395)	24 (95)	28 (111)	40 (159)	8 (30)
	1974	(428)	36 (152)	33 (140)	27 (117)	4 (19)
Psychology	1969	(650)	27 (176)	28 (184)	37 (242)	7 (48)
	1974	(842)	31 (232)	32 (284)	32 (285)	5 (41)
Social Science	1969	(1311)	19 (253)	28 (370)	40 (521)	13 (167)
	1974	(409)	47 (193)	36 (147)	14 (57)	3 (12)
Sociology	1969	(520)	16 (84)	35 (187)	45 (232)	3 (17)
	1974	(514)	44 (225)	38 (195)	15 (79)	3 (15)

TABLE V

FINAL GRADE DISTRIBUTION

ORCHARD RIDGE CAMPUS
AND
OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

	A	B	C	D	F	I	W	X	AU	WP	WF	TP	TG
1967 - 68													
CAMPUS	3098	4060	4922	2139	2451	617	3254		49	942	210	14219	22341
COLLEGE	6368	9240	10601	4201	5682	4094	6314		83	1712	402	30590	48877
1968 - 69													
CAMPUS	4379	6012	7624	3271	3159	2728	5582		122	1789	235	21286	34901
COLLEGE	9010	12271	13559	5199	6081	7829	9934		164	2909	453	40039	67384
1969 - 70													
CAMPUS	8332	9740	9482	2304	721	2496	3865	6100	15			29858	43055
COLLEGE	17895	21048	17420	4031	1642	7300	6894	10502	36			60394	86758
1970 - 71													
CAMPUS	11666	11493	8313	1814	719	3273	5650	5887	18			33286	48833
COLLEGE	24881	25571	17119	3517	1632	8036	9854	10660	36			71088	101304
1971 - 72													
CAMPUS	12217	10223	6404	1519	423	3485	5640	5458	25			30363	45394
COLLEGE	26554	22370	13618	2763	957	7973	9738	9708	46			65305	93725
1972 - 73													
CAMPUS	12321	8869	5325	1074	382	2901	4652	4819	76			27589	40419
COLLEGE	26854	20901	12226	2375	1192	7639	9075	9115	112			62356	89490
1973 - 74													
CAMPUS	14075	8515	4849	971	343	2954	4981	4976	117			28410	41734
COLLEGE	29774	20433	11679	2133	979	5673	9544	9817	156			64019	90188
1967 - 1974													
CAMPUS	66088	58912	46919	13092	8198	18454	33624	27240	422	2731	445	182311	273425
COLLEGE	141336	132014	96222	24219	18165	48544	61353	49802	633	4621	855	393791	577764