The Crusader News is always looking for new, energetic writers. If you’re interested, e-mail The Crusader at crusader@holycross.edu.

Surprisingly, buildings are not necessarily the best place to be in the event of a biological attack as they can harbor the biological pathogen and spread it within a closed space. However, as long as the attack takes place outside the building, and the ventilation system creates “positive pressure,” buildings can be turned into safe zones. The military is in the middle of a three year process of creating “military buildings resistant to germ and chemical attacks and is working on technical solutions to sense and destroy these agents before people in the building are even aware they are present.”

America’s transportation and mail systems have also been greatly affected by this new biological threat. One possible solution would be to sterilize each and every package that comes through the US Postal Service. However, a more logical preventive measure would be for organizations such as the media and government to institute this process within their own mailrooms. High Energy Electrons or cobalt, cesium or other radioactive materials could be used to bathe the mail and destroy the DNA of all organisms in it.

Our transportation systems are fairly well equipped to handle biological and chemical attacks. For example, aircraft filtration systems can capture spores that are greater than 0.3 microns and an anthrax spore is between one and three microns. The last step towards transportation security is to institute a plan, such as the one used in New York, which would enable the transportation system to be shut down almost instantaneously in the event of an attack.

Unjust grade inflation at Harvard?

Ninety-one percent of Harvard’s class of 2001 graduated with honors. In addition, 93% of Harvard’s students received grades higher than a B-. As a result, the Harvard administration was in the A rage. This has prompted an unprecedented move by the administration in which professors are now required to justify the grades which they give their students. Harvard’s administration is worried that educational experts will see this grade inflation as representative of a less rigorous and challenging education than at other Ivy League Schools which have significantly lower rates of honors and As and may ultimately lead to Harvard losing its place in the helm of American higher education.

An interesting possible solution has been proposed by Lawrence Buell, the Chair of Harvard’s English Department. He has suggested that Harvard adopt Dartmouth’s anti-inflation strategy in which students receive transcripts with two grades: the grade they earned and the median class grade. An attempt to impose this at Harvard a few years ago died in committee. Any attempt to regulate grading will cause tension between the faculty and the administration. Are those institutions that have failed to address this problem going to be shut down almost instantly?