



MEMORANDUM

To: Donna E. Shalala, President

From: Stephen Sapp
Chair, Faculty Senate

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Sapp".

Date: September 3, 2008

Subject: Faculty Senate Legislation #2008-06(B) – Recommendation to Change the University of Miami’s Requirements for Latin Honors

On August 27, 2008, the Senate voted to approve the Recommendation to Change the University of Miami’s Requirements for Latin Honors as presented by Andrea Heuson, Professor, Finance, and Chair of the 2007-08 Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee.

The recommendation is enclosed for your information.

The legislation is now forwarded to you for your action.

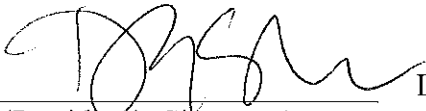
SS/rh

Enclosure (proposal)

cc: Thomas LeBlanc, Executive Vice President and Provost
William S. Green, Sr. Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Affairs
Scott Ingold, Registrar
Andrea DuPuch, Assistant Director, Honors Program
Andrea Heuson, Presenter, Chair, 2007-08 Academic Standards Committee

Faculty Senate Legislation #2008-06(B) – Recommendation to Change the University of Miami's Requirements for Latin Honors

PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE

APPROVED:  DATE: Sept 7 2008
(President's Signature)

OFFICE OR INDIVIDUAL TO IMPLEMENT: VICE PROVOST BILL GREEN

EFFECTIVE DATE OF LEGISLATION: IMMEDIATELY
(if other than June 1 next following)

NOT APPROVED AND REFERRED TO: _____

REMARKS (IF NOT APPROVED): _____

Revised Memorandum

August 22, 2008

To: Dr. Stephen Sapp, Chair of the Faculty Senate

From: Faculty Senate Committee on Academic Standards

Subj: Recommendation to Change the University of Miami's Requirements for Graduating *summa cum laude*, *magna cum laude* or *cum laude*

Several years ago the University instituted a requirement that students who wished to graduate *summa cum laude* or *magna cum laude* would be required to write an independent research thesis supervised by an inter-departmental committee. In addition, *summa* theses were vetted by a University-wide committee and the award of the *summa* designation was occasionally denied.

According to the Academic Standards Committee's collective memory, the thesis requirement was introduced to provide standardization across schools that were thought to have very different caliber students. A review of the past several Academic Standards Committee's reports on undergraduate admissions shows that student quality has risen consistently for a number of years. At the same time, the number of students who qualify for Latin Honors AND actually complete a thesis has remained pitifully small. For example, the chart on the page that follows shows that in the past two academic years barely more than 1% of our student body actually graduated with *magna* or *summa* honors when almost 10% and 5% of the graduating class, respectively, had attained the grade point average necessary to achieve that distinction. Put another way, only 1 in 5 students with a *summa*-quality g.p.a. completes a thesis while only about 1 in 8 students with a *magna*-caliber g.p.a. receives that honor. Students who do not complete the thesis requirement simply graduate *cum laude*.

Given the overall improvement in the quality of our students, the Academic Standards Committee recommended a change in the way we award the Latin Honors designation. The original recommendation closely resembles the policy in place at Duke University but is also similar to the programs in place at other Atlantic Coast Conference schools and other private members of the American Association of Universities. In a nutshell, the original recommendation replaced the thesis requirement with a sliding scale designed to award *summa cum laude* to all students with a g.p.a. at or above the top 5% of the graduating class in their school in the previous academic year. The next 10% of the students would graduate *magna cum laude* and the next 10% would graduate *cum laude*.

When this recommendation was first presented to the General Welfare Committee in March, 2008 it was returned to the committee with a request that we also include floor level gpas below which honors would not be conferred, regardless of a student's class rank. In addition, we were asked to consider a recommendation that the Faculty Senate Academic Standards committee be responsible for continued monitoring of the issue of Latin Honors. In response to these requests, the Academic Standards Committee recommends additionally that the minimum g.p.a. required for graduation Summa Cum Laude be 3.90 regardless of class rank, that the minimum g.p.a. required to earn Magna Cum Laude be 3.75 regardless of class rank and that the minimum g.p.a. required to earn Cum Laude be 3.60 regardless of class rank. These are the same g.p.a. requirements currently in place under the thesis regimen.

Furthermore, the Academic Standards Committee recommends that a review of the Latin Honors Graduation policy be included in the annual charge to the committee.

Approval of these recommendations would then leave the individual Schools, or Departments within schools, free to design research-based Honors programs that are the culmination of a student's individualized educational program. We encourage each School to consider the development of such programs that would include an Honors Thesis Research component.

Administrative aspects of graduation with Latin Honors are the responsibility of the Honors Program using information on grade point averages of previous classes supplied by the Office of Enrollment Management.

The revised recommendation was presented to the General Welfare Committee on August 20, 2008 and accepted with two added items:

- 1) That the administrative aspects of graduation with Latin Honors are the responsibility of the Honors Program using information on grade point averages of previous classes supplied by the Office of Enrollment Management, and
- 2) That graduation with Latin Honors for the Rosenstiel School be determined by Arts and Sciences criteria for the first year that the Rosenstiel undergraduate program is in place.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea J. Heuson

Finance Department, School of Business Administration and Chair of the Academic Standards Committee

Committee Members:

Manuel Huerta, A&S

Bobby Lee Robertson, Education

Michiko Skinner, A&S

Alyse Lancaster, Communication

Kenneth Rudd, Medicine

Ex-Officio:

Steve Cantrell, A&S

Bill Green, Provost's Office, A&S

Attachments:

2005-2006 and 2006-2007 grade distributions

Draft of Language of Revised Latin Honors Policy

Proposed Latin Honors GPA Requirements for 2008-2009 by School

<u>Academic Year</u>	<u>2005-06</u>	<u>2006-07</u>
Total Graduates:	2,506	2,452
Graduates with gpas at 3.9 or above	117	137
Graduates with gpas between 3.75 and 3.899	225	228
% of Graduates with gpa acceptable for Summa	4.67%	5.59%
% of Graduates with gpa acceptable for Magna	8.98%	9.30%
Actual Summa Grads (completed approved Thesis)	25	31
Actual Magna Grads (completed approved Thesis)	28	30
Actual Summa Grads as a % of Total Grads	1.00%	1.26%
Actual Summa Grads as a % of GPA Qualified	21.37%	22.63%
Actual Magna Grads as a % of Total Grads	1.12%	1.22%
Actual Magna Grads as a % of GPA Qualified	12.44%	13.16%

Magna and Summa Cum Laude:

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION *MAGNA, SUMMA AND CUM LAUDE*

1. There is one general requirement for graduating *summa, magna and cum laude*:
 - a. Cumulative Grade Point Average*
 - (1) **summa**: cumulative g.p.a. equal to or above 3.90 AND equal to or above the top 5% of the graduating class in the student's school during the previous academic year
 - (2) **magna**: cumulative g.p.a. equal to or above 3.75 AND equal to or above the next 10% of the graduating class in the student's school during the previous academic year
 - (3) **cum laude**: cumulative g.p.a. equal to or above 3.60 AND equal to or above the next 10% of the graduating class in the student's school during the previous academic year
 - a) *For the determination of graduation honors, cumulative g.p.a. is never rounded off and is the **lower** of:
 - 1) the average of all grades earned at the University of Miami, or
 - 2) the combined average of all graded work taken at the University of Miami or elsewhere (whether or not the transfer work is accepted toward a degree at the University of Miami.
 - b) the grade point averages of the previous academic year's graduating class in a school shall be calculated out to three (3) decimal places.
 - c) for the purposes of calculating the previous academic year's graduating class g.p.a. benchmarks, the academic year shall be defined as all students in the school who were awarded an undergraduate degree in the previous Summer II, Fall, Spring and Summer I semesters.
 - d) this change would go into effect for students entering in the Fall of 2009.
 - e) students enrolled prior to the Fall of 2009 who do not graduate in the Spring of 2009 or Summer I or Summer II 2009 will have the option of earning Latin Honors under the old system or the new system,
 - f) the administrative aspects of graduation with Latin Honors are the responsibility of the Honors Program using information on grade point averages of previous classes supplied by the Office of Enrollment Management.
 - g) graduation with Latin Honors for the Rosenstiel School shall be determined by Arts and Sciences criteria for the first year that the Rosenstiel undergraduate program is in place.

GPA Requirements for Graduation with Latin Honors for December 2008, May 2009 and Summer 2009

"Preliminary Summa" = gpa cut-off for top 5%

"Preliminary Magna" = gpa cut-off for next 10%

"Preliminary Cum" = gpa cut-off for next 10%

"N" = number of graduates

AR (N=64)

Preliminary Summa – 3.864

Preliminary Magna – 3.737

Preliminary Cum – 3.645

A&S* (N=1003)

Preliminary Summa – 3.918

Preliminary Magna – 3.728

Preliminary Cum – 3.445

BU (N=531)

Preliminary Summa – 3.881

Preliminary Magna – 3.717

Preliminary Cum – 3.600

CO (N=281)

Preliminary Summa – 3.870

Preliminary Magna – 3.764

Preliminary Cum – 3.675

ED (N=81)

Preliminary Summa – 3.926

Preliminary Magna – 3.827

Preliminary Cum – 3.705

EN (N=172)

Preliminary Summa – 3.916

Preliminary Magna – 3.774

Preliminary Cum – 3.701

MU (N=109)

Preliminary Summa – 3.953

Preliminary Magna – 3.768

Preliminary Cum – 3.669

NU (N=187)

Preliminary Summa – 3.880

Preliminary Magna – 3.673

Preliminary Cum – 3.464

*includes Continuing Studies