



OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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DATE: June 7, 2006  
TO: Lucia Gilbert, Vice Provost  
FROM: Mike Allen, Interim Registrar *MA*  
RE: Implementation issues regarding Faculty Council (D 4779-4780)  
pertaining to the definition of University Honors

On May 9, 2006, The Educational Policy Committee of the Faculty Council passed a revised motion pertaining to award of University Honors for students in their graduating semester. The motion is contained in document numbers D 4779-4780. The significant revisions to the legislation were the addition of the following text:

*Students, who graduated at the end of the current semester, can receive University Honors by either meeting the above criteria or:*

- *Earned University Honors in the immediately preceding two long semesters*
- *Earned a grade point average of at least 3.5 in courses completed in residence in the current semester*
- *Have no incomplete grades (symbol X) in any course taken in residence.*

The following is an analysis of the implementation issues related to this set of criteria.

1. Certification of graduation is not completed until approximately ten days after end-of-semester grade processing takes place. This timing issue impacts the following:
  - a. Award of University Honors under this set of criteria to graduating students would occur as a separate process about two weeks after normal grade processing is complete.
  - b. University Honors would not appear on grade reports of graduating students because these reports are produced in batch runs as part of end-of-semester grade processing, prior to certification of graduation
  - c. Transcripts of graduating students receiving University Honors under this second set of criteria would not include University Honors until a final

certified list of graduates was received by the Office of the Registrar and additional processing took place. These timing issues could be important to a student.

- d. Lists of students receiving University Honors, which are distributed to colleges and departments within the University, could either be delayed until all University Honors are calculated, or updated to include graduating students receiving honors at a later date, as we currently do for students whose University honors are changed as a result of post semester grade changes.
2. Incorporating multiple semesters as part of the criteria for determining University Honors significantly complicates both the initial award of University Honors and the processing of grade changes in the following manner:
- a. Students who received University Honors under the second set of criteria would need to be identified and tracked separately from students who received University Honors by meeting the normal criteria because subsequent grade changes could have different impacts on these two populations. It would take some analysis to determine how much administrative and technical staff time would be required to achieve this objective. Preliminary analysis indicates it would be a very complicated task and it would consume substantial resource to accommodate the second set of criteria.
  - b. With respect to processing grade changes, it is possible for grade changes to be processed after a student graduates. Grade change processes would need to be modified with an eye toward potential impact on students that received University Honors under the second set of criteria. Considerations would include:
    - i. A grade change, which currently has the potential to delete or add University Honors to previous semesters, could under the second set of criteria, affect University Honors not only for the semester in which the grade is changed, but also University Honors that were dependent upon previous semesters. Although the incidence of this circumstance would be relatively low, each of the 12,000 grade changes processed annually would need to be processed in a manner that considered this possibility, or simply tolerate a certain percentage of inaccuracy in student records.
    - ii. Automating this logic would be a very substantial undertaking, and it would be a complicated and costly approach to awarding University Honors to a relatively small population of students.

**In summary, this revision of University Honors criteria presents significant challenges that would be resource intensive to implement and sustain over time. The use of multiple semester criteria for determining honors eligibility is particularly problematic. We would urge consideration of other approaches that would result in a less complicated approach and still maintain the intent of the legislation.**