Proposal to Award Latin Honors by School

In 2010 the working group on Grade Inflation analyzed the 449,999 grades given in all courses at Rice over a 10 year period. Several clear findings emerged:

1) There is a clear positive trend in average grades being given for courses at Rice. This trend is true: i) For both Fall and Spring; ii) At all levels of undergraduate and graduate courses; and, iii) Across schools. For one example see Figure 1. This potential problem has been recommended for consideration next year but not here.

2) For these years Latin Honors (Summa Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude and Cum Laude) are awarded to the top 30% of GPAs for graduating students. Analysis across schools revealed large discrepancies in the percent of graduating students being awarded honors from a high of 48.3% to a low of 4.7%. For the relevant numbers by school see Figure 2.

To remedy this discrepancy the CUC recommended a change in the way the top 30% of students receiving Latin Honors is calculated. It would be the top 30% of GPAs within each school. The formal recommendation, approved by the CUC, is below.

Proposal to Determine Latin Honors (GA Language)

Recipients are determined by the following procedure: At the end of the spring semester and after receipt of all grades, the grade point average within the highest five percent of the year’s graduating majors within each school is recommended for the summa cum laude honor. The grade point average included within the next highest 10 percent is used to determine those eligible to graduate with the magna cum laude honor. Finally, the grade point average included within the next 15 percent is used to determine those majors eligible to graduate with the cum laude honor. Thus, approximately 30 percent of each graduating class, distributed approximately evenly across all schools, receives Latin Honors on graduation.
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This process will be monitored over a five-year period.

Figure 1
Average Grades, All Students, All Courses For The Fall And Spring, Last Ten Years

- There is a statistically significant:
  1) Year effect (P < .000)
  2) Term effect (P < .000)
- This was run on 449,999 individual records
There is a clear difference in the proportion of each school’s graduating class that graduate with honors.