

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY
Amendment to Regulation 11 on Honors Designations

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

CEP is proposing an amendment to Santa Cruz Regulation 11 on UCSC honors designations. Currently SCR Chapter 11 establishes honors in the *major* (SCR 11.1) and *college* honors for “overall academic work” (SCR 11.2). CEP’s proposed amendments would do the following:

- establish a category of *University Honors* using the Latin designations *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *summa cum laude*. Eligibility for University Honors would be based on the UC grade point average.
- establish a quarterly Dean’s Honors List based on the current quarter’s GPA and the units earned and graded.

Honors *programs* (involving curricular and extracurricular opportunities) and honors *designations* (such as those entertained in this legislative proposal) are a means of attracting and retaining students, of acknowledging and rewarding student achievement, and of reinforcing academic excellence. Many on campus are concerned that UCSC lags behind our sister campuses in fostering these goals. We are the only UC campus with undergraduate programs that does not have any campuswide honors program. We are also the only campus lacking a Dean’s (“quarterly”, “to date”, “provost”) honors list or Universitywide criteria for awarding honors at graduation. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence (as those involved in any way in University admissions know) that these lacunae can be a disincentive for prospective and enrolled students. Of equal concern is the finding by CEP’s Report on Undergraduate Graduation Rates (done in collaboration with the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education and the Office of Institutional Research and Policy Studies) that UC Santa Cruz retains its academically most-prepared students at lower percentages than would be expected.¹ For reasons such as these, a recent ad hoc UCSC Honors Committee recommended that our campus establish a category of University Honors.²

CEP consulted with the college provosts on the question of whether to establish University Honors in addition to, or in place of, the currently existing college honors (which are themselves based on “overall academic performance”). CEP agrees with the Council of Provosts that there are good reasons to maintain college honors as a separate category. College identity is an important feature of our campus. A college’s ability to award college honors, and its autonomy in deciding what the criteria might be, contribute to a college’s identity and sense of community. A category of University Honors with Latin designations, in turn, has its own advantages of being more familiar to the general population and subject to minimum criteria that hold consistently across the University (though see below regarding Schools).

¹ As defined by students in the highest two quintiles based on either high school GPA or standardized test scores. Find the report at <http://senate.ucsc.edu/cep/CEPretention1495.pdf>.

² Establishing a UC Santa Cruz Campuswide Honors Program: a report to the Academic Senate from the Committee on Honors. June 2004. We would like to particularly acknowledge the work of this committee as a source of ideas.

We can contextualize other aspects of the proposed legislation as follows.

Requirement of at least 70 completed UC units (11.5)

All other UC campuses specify that, in order to be eligible for honors, a student must complete a minimum number of UC units, as follows:

	Minimum UC units	Minimum <i>graded</i>	Minimum in residence
UCB	50 (semester)	43	30
UCD	45		
UCI	72		
UCLA	90	90	
UCM	50 (semester)	43	30
UCR	60	60	
UCSD	80	80	
UCSB	76	76	
UCSC	70 (proposed)		

In our view a requirement of 70 UC units, which amounts to a bit more than a year and a half of normal study, strikes a reasonable balance between requiring substantial UC-level work on the one hand, and not excluding the possibility of honors to relatively late UC transfers on the other.

As can be seen above, some campuses go further in stipulating the number of completed UC units that must be graded in order for there to be consideration for honors. Note that all UC campuses require at least two thirds of units applied toward graduation to be letter graded; UCSC requires three fourths of UCSC units applied toward graduation to be letter graded. It therefore follows from the general requirement of 70 units completed that at least 47-52 units completed by a graduating UCSC student would be letter graded (the exact number depending on whether any units were completed at UCs other than UCSC).

Two campuses also stipulate a minimum number of units completed *at that campus* (as opposed to at some other UC). UCSC already has a minimum residency requirement for all students, who must have completed at least 45 UCSC units to graduate from UCSC. An additional such requirement for honors would be redundant.

Rankings and designations

The rankings proposed here for determining which of the three honors designations applies can be compared to those at other UC campuses below.

	Highest rank	Next highest	Next highest	Total
UCB	top 3%	next 7%	next 10%	20%
UCD ³	top 2%	next 2%	next 4%	8%
UCI	top 1%	next 2%	next 9%	12%
UCLA	top 5%	next 5%	next 10%	20%
UCM	top 2%	next 4%	next 10%	16%
UCR	top 2%	next 4%	next 10%	16%
UCSD	top 2%	next 4%	next 8%	14%
UCSB	top 2.5%	next 6%	next 11.5%	20%
UCSC	top 2%	next 3%	next 10%	15% (proposed)

Dean’s Honors criteria

To be eligible for quarterly Dean’s Honors (or the equivalent), all other UC campuses require that a student complete at least 12 letter-graded units that quarter and that the GPA for the quarter meet a minimum (often 3.5 if it is not tied to University Honors at graduation rankings as proposed here). Some campuses also specifically mention that incompletes or grades below B or C will render a student ineligible.

Though 12 units is the minimum load that qualifies a student for financial aid, UCSC students are normally expected to complete 15 units each quarter. We would like to avoid a standard for Dean’s Honors that would seem to endorse 12 units as a good minimal load; hence our requirement of 15 units. At the same time, requiring all of those units to be graded (to be considered for Dean’s Honors) is inconsistent with the University’s policy of endorsing the occasional Pass/No Pass course. Some required courses exist that are *only* P/NP (cannot be graded). Taking one such course should not disqualify a student for Dean’s Honors.

Schools

UCSC has one distinct School, the School of Engineering, and it may well acquire more in time. Many of our sister campuses allow or require distinct means of determining rankings (and hence honors designations) for different Schools, subject to Universitywide criteria. We find this to be appropriate.

A complication in wording arises because UCSC has no “School of Arts, Letters, and Sciences” parallel to its School of Engineering. That is, the divisions of Arts, Humanities, Physical and Biological Sciences, and Social Sciences do not constitute or belong to any Schools. Section 11.4 of the proposed legislation stipulates that, for the purposes of interpreting legislation on University and Dean’s Honors, students within any established School constitute a “group”, and students not in any established School together also constitute a “group”.

The legislation would currently have the effect of dividing UCSC students into two populations – School of Engineering students and all other students. Rankings would be calculated separately

³ The percentages UCD admits into each category depend on the number of units completed. These figures are for students who have completed 45-89 units at UC.

for the two groups based on GPAs within the respective populations. Given the proposed wording, any newly established School at UCSC would be treated separately as well.

Because only Schools or Colleges can award honors designations according to systemwide Regulations (SR 732), because at least one of our defined “groups” is not within any School or College, and because it is colleges at UCSC that give the degree for all UCSC students, the proposed legislation establishes that the colleges award University Honors. But University Honors will be awarded based on campuswide criteria (defined in 11.5) and will appear on transcripts and diplomas as “University Honors, (Summa/Magna) cum Laude” (as appropriate).

CEP will establish policy allowing the Registrar to implement these Regulations. Currently under consideration are the following:

1. Threshold GPAs (within any “group”) would be based on the average GPAs at graduation of the past two year’s UCSC graduates. This moving average would be updated yearly.
2. For the purposes of awarding Dean’s Honors, a student would be considered to be in the School of Engineering if that student is a declared SOE major. Until that time such a student would be counted as non-SOE.

Honors and integrity

Some other UC campuses include language in their Regulations establishing the University’s prerogative to withhold an honors designation given violations of academic integrity. Given the seriousness of this issue and suggestions that plagiarism is becoming more endemic⁴, CEP is strongly in favor of doing the same (see 11.7). The designation “reportable” is already defined, referring to violations that have been deemed important enough to warrant disclosure outside of the University (when, for example, graduate or professional schools inquire about a student’s record). It is college provosts at UCSC who make the judgment that a violation is “reportable”.

Current wording	Proposed wording
11.1 At the time an agency certifies that a student has fulfilled the requirements for a major, it may recommend the award of Honors or Highest Honors in the major field. The notation "Honors (or Highest Honors) in (name of major)" shall appear on the diploma and on the transcript. (Am 27 Jan 71; EC 1 Aug 76)	11.1 Unchanged
11.2 The Faculty of each college shall recommend in writing such of its students as it deems merit the award of honors for overall academic work. It shall send such	11.2 Unchanged

⁴ See the recent San Francisco Article “Everybody does it” at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2007/09/09/CM59RIBI7.DTL>.

recommendations to the Registrar. The notation, "College Honors" shall appear on the diploma and on the transcript. (Am 27 Jan 71)

11.3 In accordance with SR 640, each agency that has an approved major that elects to award Honors shall submit the criteria for such an award to the Committee on Educational Policy for its review, approval, and permanent record. Any change in criteria will require resubmittal. (En 31 May 78; CC 28 Jan 81, 31 Aug 99)

11.3 Unchanged

11.4 For the purposes of interpreting SCR 11.5-6, honors eligibility for students whose degree program is in an established School shall be based upon the GPA thresholds calculated for their School. Honors eligibility for other students shall be based upon the GPA thresholds calculated for students whose degree program is not part of an established School. The term "group" refers to groups defined in this way.

11.5 University Honors at graduation shall be awarded by a student's college, subject only to criteria provided here and in 11.7. Students eligible for University Honors at graduation shall be those who have completed 70 or more units at the University of California and have attained in their group a UC GPA that places them in rankings as follows: summa cum laude, top 2%; magna cum laude, next 3%; cum laude, next 10%. Each year and for each group the Registrar shall calculate the GPA thresholds required for these levels of University Honors, based on the GPAs of recent graduates. These GPA thresholds shall be published and serve as criteria for University Honors at graduation during the next academic year. The notation "University Honors, (Summa/Magna) cum Laude" (as appropriate) shall appear on the diploma and on the transcript.

11.6 Students will be eligible for quarterly Dean's Honors if they have earned a

	<p><u>minimum of 15 units that quarter, of which at least 10 are graded, with a term grade point average equal to or higher than that required for University Honors at graduation in their group for the current academic year. Dean's Honors are listed on student transcripts.</u></p> <p><u>11.7 Any student who has a reportable disciplinary sanction for a violation of academic integrity policies may be ineligible for any honors designation, at the discretion of the agency that awards the designation.</u></p>
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Sincerely,
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