Proposal to Update Commendation and Graduation Honors Policies  
College of Medicine, Upstate Medical University  
July 9, 2013

Following the change in grading to Pass/Fail for years 1 and 2, it is necessary to update the policy for awarding Dean’s Commendation and Graduation Honors. We offer the following recommendations (bolded language for the Student Handbook):

COMMENDATION

Commendation will no longer be awarded in the pre-clerkship curriculum. We recommend:

Commendation may be awarded to students for outstanding performance in the required clerkships. To qualify, a student must earn at least 24 credits of honor in any of the required clerkship courses and have no deficient grades in the required clerkships. Regardless of the number of credits of honor earned, a student may not be commended if the transcript records any violations of the Code of Conduct or if there have been concerns about unprofessional behavior. A student who earns Commendation will receive a letter from the Dean of the College of Medicine and a permanent notation will be recorded on the academic transcript.

GRADUATION HONORS

Previous policy defined that students receive a minimum total number of honors credits for each level of honors, and a minimum number of honors credits in both the pre-clinical and clinical years. In the past three years of graduating cohorts, between 8 and 11% of students graduate with honors. To provide another benchmark, up to 17% of each class is elected to AOA (the national limit). Very few graduate summa (1 to 4 in the past three years) and the rest are fairly evenly distributed cum laude and magna. In a retrospective calculation of the past three years of graduating cohorts, achieving a mean of approximately 48 honors credits would result in approximately 10% of students receiving graduation honors. We recommend continuing current policy for the next two graduating cohorts, following which all graduation honors would be listed as a simple Cum Laude, with guidelines below:

For students graduating in 2014 and 2015 only, a student is eligible to graduate with honors if the student has received at least 32 of the honor credits during the basic science years and at least 32 of the honor credits during the clinical years.

1. A student is eligible to graduate “Cum Laude” when a student:
   a. Has been commended in at least three of the four years, OR
   b. Has achieved 96 credits of honors in four years

2. A student is eligible to graduate “Magna Cum Laude” when the student:
   a. Has been commended all fours years, OR
   b. Has achieved 120 credits of honors in four years
3. A student is eligible to graduate “Summa Cum Laude” when the student has achieved 144 credits of honors in four years.

4. A transfer student is eligible to graduate “Cum Laude” when the student:
   a. Has been commended for two years and the pre-clinical record clearly demonstrates excellence, OR
   b. Has achieved 48 credits of honors in Upstate Medical University approved courses and has evidence of excellence in the pre-clinical years

5. Regardless of other academic achievements, a student may not graduate with honors if the transcript records any violations of the Code of Conduct or if there have been concerns about unprofessional behavior

Beginning with the students graduating in 2016, a student will be eligible to graduate CUM LAUDE when a student has accumulated 48 credits of honors in the clinical years. Regardless of other academic achievements, a student may not graduate with honors if the transcript records any violations of the Code of Conduct or if there have been concerns about unprofessional behavior.

Submitted by:

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