

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
The Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

Minutes

240 SH

November 2, 2023

Present: Cornelia Lang, Cinda Coggins Mosher, Asha Bhandary, Christine Shea, Amira Qidwai, Jill Beckman

Absent: Anita Jung, Emilie Maurel Destruel, Rodica Curtu, Jean-François Charles, Amy Strathman

1. Discussion and revision of the October 12 minutes, focused on the Dean's visit to present and discuss the proposed revisions of the CLAS MOPP. The committee approved the revised minutes.
2. Director of Academic Policies and Student Services (CLAS UP), Jennifer Bertrand, visited the committee to discuss possible changes to the college's criteria for graduation with distinction. Historically, each college at UI has maintained different criteria, and this has been confusing for students (some colleges use standard and stable GPA thresholds and other colleges use percentile rank that is calculated annually).

CLAS currently uses the following class percentile rank requirements for graduation with distinction: highest distinction is the top 2% of class, high distinction is next highest 3% of students and distinction is the next highest 5%. These percentiles are calculated using UI GPA and cumulative GPA and they are set at the beginning of each calendar year using the previous years' students. Students have expressed concerns that the standards essentially change each year, because the GPA range of each level of distinction varies year to year. For the last few years, highest distinction in CLAS has required a GPA of 4.0 or higher; some students have complained that this an unrealistically high standard and is largely based on the distribution of instructors and courses that provide students the opportunity to earn an A+. Standards for A+ grades also vary across courses and instructors.

Therefore, CLAS has been asked by the Registrar and Provost's Office to consider changing its criteria for distinction for students, and to consider using a set of criteria that would be consistent across all UI undergraduate colleges. There were a number of models presented to the Associate Deans of UI undergraduate colleges and the criteria that these deans have agreed upon is the following:

- a. Highest Distinction: GPA=3.95+
- b. High Distinction: GPA=3.85-3.94
- c. Distinction: GPA=3.75-3.84

This year, this would allow approximately 18% of CLAS students to be recognized with one type of distinction at graduation. This percentage is similar to that of our peer institutions, though the distinction criteria vary widely across colleges of liberal arts and sciences in the Big10 academic alliance.

UEPCC members had a discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of these proposed criteria and ultimately expressed support and approval for moving forward with these clearer GPA-based guidelines for graduation with distinction, starting as soon as Spring 2024.

3. Next the committee considered a proposal that GECC recommended for approval for the new World Language and Cultural Exploration GE category (starting Summer 2024, as part of the new World Language Pathways program available to students). ITAL:2205 *Exploring Italy* focuses on Italian national identity through film and language and will be taught in English with no prior knowledge of Italian needed. The committee approved the proposal for inclusion as the first course in the new WLCE category!

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Beckman, UEPCC Secretary