

Date: December 18, 2015

To: Scott Owczarek, University Registrar
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From: Michelle Young, Academic Planning and Institutional Research
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RE: Recommendations for Recording of Honors Designations on the Student Record

At the request of the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC), and as your designated appointees, over the past eighteen months we have conducted a review of administrative policies and procedures related to identifying honors programs, courses, and students in the student information system (ISIS). This review did not include honors based on academic standing. Our charge was to evaluate how the various honors programs are administered at UW-Madison, specifically the range of practices for tracking student's declaration, accessing honors courses, progress and completion of honors programs. The objective was to identify points of inconsistency and/or confusion for administrators, staff, advisors and students and to make recommendations that could lead to efficiency gains and transparent processes.

Toward that end, we met with the University Honors Committee to glean their understanding of and expectations for administrative processes and oversight. From there, we met with representatives of the school/college undergraduate honors programs to ascertain their methods for identifying and tracking students in their respective programs and their perceptions regarding the strengths and opportunities for improvement in their current practices. These discussions yielded several consistent themes:

- ❖ The utilization of multiple markers (student groups, transcript text, sub-plans and academic actions) within ISIS to declare or cancel a student's participation in an honors program is overly complex, very manual to maintain and often results in inaccurate and/or inconsistent data (e.g. a student may appear to be in an honors program within one school/college based on outdated transcript text but may have actually moved to another school/college).
- ❖ The inaccuracies that occur as a result of the use of multiple markers makes reporting accurate participation numbers onerous at best and impossible at worst. Additional complications of inaccurate application of honors participation markers include:
 - A missing honors marker may negatively impact a student's eligibility to enroll in classes, either preventing them from enrolling in honors courses for which they are eligible or allowing them to enroll in honors courses when they are no longer eligible to do so; this makes predicting demand for and managing enrollment in these courses difficult;
 - A lingering honors program declaration marker that has not been removed when a student withdraws from an honors program may have a deleterious effect on the student's ability to have their degree conferred until that marker is cleaned up;
 - The transcript text honors marker is added when a student has declared his/her participation in an honors program; that marker continues to display even when a student

has withdrawn from the program and conveys misleading information to the public receiving/reviewing that transcript because they likely assume that s/he continued to participate and/or earn the honors designation, even if that completion is not specifically indicated.

- ❖ The honors program staff are spending inordinate amounts of time reconciling their records of students who are active in their programs with the multiple markers employed in ISIS. The inconsistent and/or inaccurate presence of markers also makes their ability to review and clear their completion of honors requirements for graduation more time consuming and complex.
- ❖ Inconsistent practices regarding the recording of honors designations on the diploma and student eligibility to wear honors commencement regalia creates confusion among advisors as well as students.

Proposed Recommendations for Changes to Honors Program Designations

To address the primary challenges articulated by honors program representatives, we submit the following recommendations:

1. Eliminate the use of multiple markers in ISIS and track a student's participation in honors exclusively using program/plan/sub-plan designations.
 - a. Eliminate the use of transcript text entirely
 - b. Eliminate the use of student groups entirely
2. Create student plans connected to the student's academic program for each honors classification that is awarded at the degree level.
 - a. Participation in the honors program would be declared via the online declaration/cancellation process.
 - b. Requisites enforcing honors participation in order for class enrollment would look for plan codes not student groups
 - c. When moving from a degree program in one school/college to a different school/college, the honors designation would be removed from the student record and honors participation in that student's new school/college would have to be declared anew.
 - d. If a change of degree program results in a new plan being declared and a previously declared plan transitioning to an "additional" major status, the honors designation will remain on the student's record.
 - e. When changing degree programs within the same school/college, the honors designation would be retained on the student record.
 - f. When changing majors/plans within the same degree program, the honors designation would be retained on the student record.
 - g. If the student's participation in the honors program ended, a cancellation using the online declaration/cancellation process would be submitted and no record of the

student's previous participation in said honors program would remain on the student's official or unofficial transcript

- h. New plan codes of "HNR XXX" (e.g. HNR ALS, HNR BA, HNR BME, HNR BS, , etc.) will be created for each degree program approved to award honors and all of the new plan codes will have a plan type of HON
 - i. The following honors programs have previously received full governance approval and the proposed changes would be automatically implemented and applied. Should any school or college wish to create an honors program in the future, UAPC approval will be required.
 - i. College of Letters and Science Honors in the Liberal Arts
 - ii. College of Engineering Honors in the Liberal Arts
 - iii. College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Honors
 - iv. School of Nursing Honors
 - v. School of Human Ecology Honors
 - vi. College of Letters and Science Biocore Honors
 - vii. College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Biocore Honors
3. For those honors classifications that are connected to a major (e.g. L&S Honors in the Major), an "Honors" sub-plan would be created and attached to the declared major.
- a. Participation in the honors program would be declared via the online declaration/cancellation process.
 - b. Requisites enforcing honors participation in order for class enrollment would look for sub-plan codes not student groups.
 - c. When changing degree programs, the honors designation would be removed from the student record and would need to be declared in the new program.
 - d. If a change of degree program results in a new plan being declared and a previously declared plan transitioning to an "additional" major status, the honors designation will remain on the student's record.
 - e. If the student were changing plans within the same degree program, the honors in the major sub-plan would be removed and would have to be declared anew along with the new major/plan.
 - f. If the student participation in the honors program ended, a cancellation using the online declaration/cancellation process would be submitted.
 - g. A subplan type, HON already exists and appropriate subplan codes would be created and attached to eligible plans.
 - h. The following honors programs previously received full governance approval and the proposed changes would be automatically implemented and applied. Should any school or college wish to create an honors program in the future, UAPC approval will be required.
 - i. College of Letters and Science Honors in the Major
 - ii. College of Engineering Honors in Research

4. Achieve consistency by recording all honors designations on the diploma and allowing all students in honors programs to be eligible to wear honors commencement regalia.

Implementation Timeline

Should UAPC approve these recommendations, it is our endorsement that a full calendar year be provided as the minimum recommended lead time to achieve implementation. Substantial infrastructure changes in both ISIS and DARS will be necessary to fully implement these recommendations, training and outreach with the honors programs will need to be conducted and the records of students continuing in honors programs will need to be converted to the new structure.

Thank you for your support as we conducted this review. We stand ready to help answer any questions or provide any additional details you may need to evaluate our recommendations.