

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE
FACULTY SENATE

Senate Document Number 1515F
Date of Senate Approval 12/03/15

Statement of Faculty Senate Action:

APC Document 10: **Graduation/Commencement Modification Proposal***

Effective Date: **Spring 2016**

Summary:

Graduation is the process of completing all requirements for a degree program and being awarded a degree. To receive a degree, candidates are required to apply for graduation by the deadline and to complete all requirements by the last day of the term in which the degree will be conferred.

Commencement is a ceremony in which a student is recognized by the University community, family, and friends. Participating in commencement does not imply or guarantee that a student has graduated.

Historically, UNC Asheville has these acts tightly woven together.

Proposal:

This document proposes the separation of graduation from commencement. Commencement would continue to be a ceremony to acknowledge students who are pending graduation. **Students may participate in commencement if they have applied for graduation and are within 8 hours of completing all degree requirements.** A statement to this effect will be added to the Course Catalog.

Implementation:

- We are proposing the change be effective for the Spring 2016 semester (May ceremony).
- To be eligible to participate in commencement, students must apply for graduation by the deadline date.
- Upon application, the Registrar's office will review the record to confirm they are within the designated threshold of 8 hours from graduation for participation in commencement and place them in a pending status.
- Application and subsequent communications to the pending graduates will clearly indicate when the diploma would be received (i.e. sometime after ceremony).
- Once the degree requirements were confirmed as complete, students will be officially awarded their degree in the BANNER system as of a set date for each semester.
- The commencement program will list student names as "candidates for degrees" and anticipated Latin Honors. (See below for sample wording)

Recognitions and Honors

Graduation with Honors

Graduation with honors for undergraduates is based on all courses (including the last semester's work) for which grades and grade points are given. The honors shown in the commencement program for May undergraduates, however, are based on work taken through Fall 2015. Since spring semester grades had not been reported at the time this program was printed, some modifications in the tentative honors shown will have to be made following the recording of the spring semester 2016 grades. To be eligible for honors at the end of the senior year, a student must have completed at least 60 hours of work in residence at UNC Asheville, not including hours for which credit and grade points have been received by special examinations.

Honors are awarded to graduating seniors as follows. The highest level is summa cum laude (with highest honor), maintaining a grade point average between 3.90–4.00 for all work taken at The University of North Carolina at Asheville. The next level, magna cum laude (with great honor), indicates an average of 3.75–3.89. The third level, cum laude (with honor), represents an achievement of 3.60–3.74.

Rationale:

There are many benefits for students and faculty from this new policy which other schools enjoy:

- Our graduating seniors could take their exams on the same schedule as all other students.
- Grades of graduating seniors would be due on the same schedule as all other students.
- Faculty are relieved from the pressure and the additional work the grading deadline imposed.
- Students will not receive their actual diplomas during commencement ceremony. This would eliminate the time-consuming, stressful work of aligning students and diplomas in the same order during the ceremony.
- Students who will be completing their last class or two in the following semester would be able to participate in the preceding semester's commencement which would be especially beneficial to students who graduate at the end of the Summer semester.
- This policy diminishes the likelihood of a student who fails to graduate in the Spring semester from being pulled from the commencement ceremony disappointing family members who purchased plane tickets, etc. to attend the commencement celebration.

Impact:

In general, this proposed policy relieves stress on all stakeholders (students, families, faculty, and staff/administration) allowing the time leading up to commencement be a series of happy, celebratory events. However, there is one major issue to be worked out to successfully implement this change: how to accurately award the university latin distinctions with a policy to handle when a student officially graduates with a lower or a higher distinction than the one bestowed at commencement.

****Note: This is a policy proposal and not a "catalog copy" document. The document with the wording for the catalog will be submitted for approval at a later date.***