

University discusses possible changes to Latin honors system

By: Anna Turner

For The Miami Student

Run date: 2 Nov. 2007

The Latin honors system, a traditional graduation honors system recognized at Miami University, is facing possible reformation in an attempt to achieve equal academic recognition across disciplines, said John Skillings, associate vice president for academic affairs.

Upon graduation, a student can currently graduate with one of three Latin honors: cum laude (with honor), magna cum laude (with great honor) and summa cum laude (with highest honor). Currently, a student's numerical GPA determines whether or not he or she will graduate with Latin honors.

According to the Senate Resolution to Recalculate Latin Honors at the Division Level, passed by the university senate, a student with a 3.5 GPA receives cum laude, 3.75 magna cum laude and 3.9 summa cum laude.

With the present system, 25 percent of Miami's graduating class receives Latin honors upon graduation.

However a potential reformation of the system would lower that number to 17 percent, with 2 percent receiving summa cum laude, 5 percent receiving magna cum laude and 10 percent receiving cum laude.

Currently, Provost Jeffrey Herbst, the academic policy committee and the Office of the Registrar are working on the project, although officials have been discussing the matter for a few years now, after several universities (such as Harvard University and The University of Notre Dame) switched systems.

The possible change would then calculate Latin honors on the divisional level, instead of the university level, and would be based on class rank rather than GPA.

According to the resolution, this would produce a balanced depiction of academic achievement throughout campus.

"Grades are different in different disciplines," Skillings said. "We need equity cross-campus."

However, Assistant Registrar Carol Jones said that these plans are still in the beginning stages.

"Currently, the provost academic policy committee and the Office of the Registrar are working through the policy and the implementation phases," Jones said.

According to Jones, the committee is hoping to see the Latin honors reformation come into effect for the class of 2009.

Already, schools such as Harvard University and Boston University have reformed their Latin honors system in a similar manner.

However, Boston University (BU) implemented change in their system in 2004 to help battle grade inflation, which is the idea that high grades are given out too frequently and for substandard work, according to BU's The Daily Free Press.

Daniel Prior, an assistant professor of history, agrees that changing the honors system will simultaneously make achieving such honors more competitive, as well as fight grade inflation.

"I don't think there's a huge distinction to be drawn between the GPA and what percentage of the class you graduate," Prior said.

Skillings claims that at Miami the Latin honors reformation is not an issue of grade inflation, but of giving students across academic disciplines equal opportunity to receive Latin honors.

First-year Lauren Hughes thinks that changing the system will achieve the opposite.

"By basing it on GPA rather than class rank, more people get an opportunity," Hughes said.

"Reaching that level of academic achievement is outstanding, and people should be rewarded for their hard work."

Skillings agreed that graduating with Latin honors comes with immense prestige. In the business world, he said, employers take into consideration the academic performance of their prospective employee, and being bestowed with Latin honors is evidence to one's diligent work ethic.

Those two or three Latin words after "he or she graduated..." can mean a lot to some employers, Skillings said.

According to Jones, the reformation will continue to be discussed by the provost, academic policy committee and the Office of the Registrar to further expand on the current plans.



**All materials copyright and
exclusively owned by Anna
Turner and Snobster Media
LLC.**

**Our Media is Better Than
Your Media.**