

## FAPSC recommendation for new GPA distinction levels

In the Fall of 2011, FAPSC was requested by a member of the faculty to review the distinction levels in light of concerns that they are higher than regional peer institutions which could disadvantage some of our higher performing students after they graduate.

As part of this study, the GPA scores of our graduating students over the last five years were analyzed to determine the percentage graduating above specific GPA levels, see Appendix A. Additionally, a survey of distinction levels used by peer institutions is shown in Table 1. Further sample of comparable universities and guidelines from commercial graduation merchandisers is given in Appendix B. Based on these studies, a recommended revision of the GPA distinction levels is provided in Table 2. The rationale for the recommended revision is detailed below.

Table 1: Summary of GPA distinction levels from peer institutions (further data is to be found in spreadsheet file GPADistinctionSurveyRev2.xlsx held by S .T. Smith) (see also table of other comparable institutions and published guidelines appendix B)

Institution	Cum Laude	Magna Cum Laude	Summa Cum Laude
Appalachian State University	3.45	3.65	3.85
Elizabeth City State University	3.25	3.6	3.8
NC State University	3.25	3.75	3.8
UNC Asheville	3.6	3.75	3.9
UNC Chapel Hill	Dn and highest Dn see survey	3.5	3.8
UNC Greensboro	3.5	3.7	3.9
UNC Wilmington	3.5	3.7	3.9
George Mason University	3.5	3.7	3.9
Georgia State University	3.5	3.7	3.9
Kent State University	3.3	3.6	3.8
Portland State University	3.67	3.8	3.9
San Diego State University	3.645	3.790	3.912
University of Delaware	3.6	3.8	3.9
University of Louisville	3.5	3.75	3.9
University of Maryland- Baltimore Co.	3.5	3.75	3.95

Texas A&M	3.5	3.7	3.9
University of Massachusetts-Lowell	3.25	3.5	3.85
Average	3.47	3.69	3.87

Table 2: Suggested revision to GPA distinction categories (survey average in parentheses)

Distinction	Current levels	Percent receiving	New proposed levels	Percent receiving
Summa cum laude	4.0	3 %	3.9 - 4.0 (3.87)	5.5 %
Magna cum laude	3.8 - <4.0	7 %	3.7 - <3.9 (3.69)	8.5 %
Cum laude	3.4 - <3.8	20 %	3.4 - <3.7 (3.47)	16 %

## Rationale

There are a number of reasons to make these changes. Firstly, these new distinction levels will bring us more ‘in line’ with our peer institutions across North Carolina and nationally. These new levels correspond closely to the percentage levels used by some of the institutions reviewed. Hence these changes will allow our graduates to better compete with "summa" graduates from peer institutions when interviewing with employers and graduate schools. Lowering the 4.0 bar to something less than perfection would encourage students with one or two B's to continue their efforts to pursue a summa cum laude degree. Finally it was recognized that some programs have significant teamwork components that might set an upper limit on the achievable GPA of some students in these programs. In the survey data provided in Appendix C showing the percentage of graduating students receiving distinctions, it is apparent there is considerable variability with Summa Cum Laude distinction representing anything from zero (Mechanical engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering) to more than 2 %. This is true even if Departments or programs graduating less than 40 students per semester are excluded.

## Implementation

If these changes are adopted, this will be reflected in University policy as shown below.

### UNC Charlotte Academic Policy: Academic Honors

#### Policy Statement

##### CHANCELLOR’S LIST

The Chancellor's List recognizes undergraduate degree-seeking students with outstanding records of academic performance. To qualify for the Chancellor's List during the fall or spring semester, a full-time student must earn a grade point average of at least 3.8 in 12 or more semester hours of credit graded A, B, or C, with no grade less than C. A part-time student must earn a combined fall and spring grade point average of at least 3.8 in 12 or more semester hours of credit graded A, B, or C, with no grade less than C. To qualify for the Chancellor's List as a part-time student, a student must enroll on a part-time basis in both fall and spring semesters in the same academic year. Students who receive the grade of AU, H,

or P are not excluded from recognition as long as 12 hours are completed with A, B, or C. Students who receive the grade of D, F, I, NR, or N are not eligible for recognition. Chancellor's List recognition appears on the student's academic record (official transcript).

### DEAN'S LIST

The Dean's List recognizes undergraduate degree-seeking full-time students who earn a grade point average of at least 3.4 and not more than 3.79 and meet all other criteria as described for the Chancellor's List. Dean's List recognition appears on the student's academic record (official transcript).

### GRADUATION WITH DISTINCTION

Students may earn undergraduate degrees at different levels of distinction: Cum Laude ("With Honor"), Magna Cum Laude ("With Great Honor"), and Summa Cum Laude ("With Highest Honor"). Each of the undergraduate degrees is awarded Cum Laude when the graduating student's cumulative grade point average is 3.4 or more but less than 3.8, Magna Cum Laude when it is at least 3.8 but less than 4.0, and Summa Cum Laude when it is 4.0. To be eligible to graduate with distinction, a student must have a grade point average computed on at least 48 semester hours of credit completed in residence at UNC Charlotte.

This would change to (changes in blue)

### GRADUATION WITH DISTINCTION

Students may earn undergraduate degrees at different levels of distinction: Cum Laude ("With Honor"), Magna Cum Laude ("With Great Honor"), and Summa Cum Laude ("With Highest Honor"). Each of the undergraduate degrees is awarded Cum Laude when the graduating student's cumulative grade point average is 3.4 or more but less than 3.7, Magna Cum Laude when it is at least 3.7 but less than 3.9, and Summa Cum Laude when it is at least 3.9. To be eligible to graduate with distinction, a student must have a grade point average computed on at least 48 semester hours of credit completed in residence at UNC Charlotte.

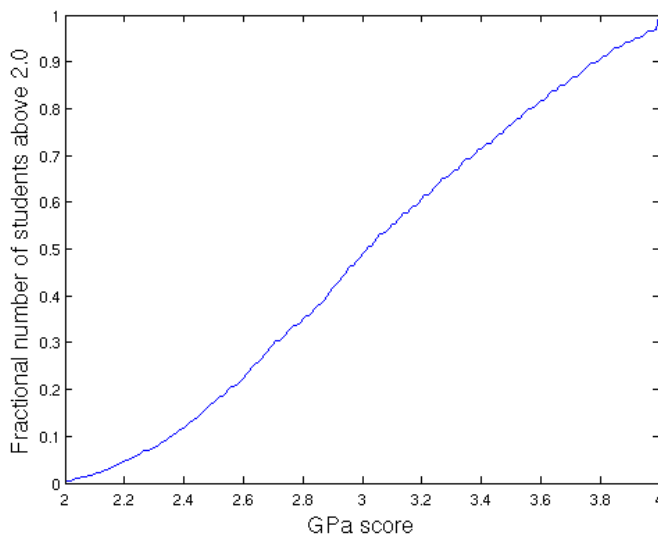


Figure 1: Total fraction of students graduating as a function of GPA score over the period Fall 2007 - Spring 2011. Total students = 16329

### Appendix A: Fractional number of students GPA distribution.

Based on GPA data from 2007 up to the Spring semester of 2011, the cumulative fraction of students scoring above 2.0 upon graduation is plotted in figure 1. To get a feel for the impact of breakpoints for GPA based distinction levels the following 3 graphs provide zoomed views of Figure 1. From this data it is

possible to compare the current distinction criteria with other proposals. Table 1 below indicates total percentage of students that would receive distinctions based on the current and one of the proposed new criteria.

Distinction	Current levels	Percent receiving	New proposed levels	Percent receiving
Summa cum laude	4.0	3 %	3.9 - 4.0	5.5 %
Magna cum laude	3.8 - <4.0	7 %	3.7 - <3.9	8.5 %
Cum laude	3.4 - <3.8	20 %	3.4 - <3.7	16 %

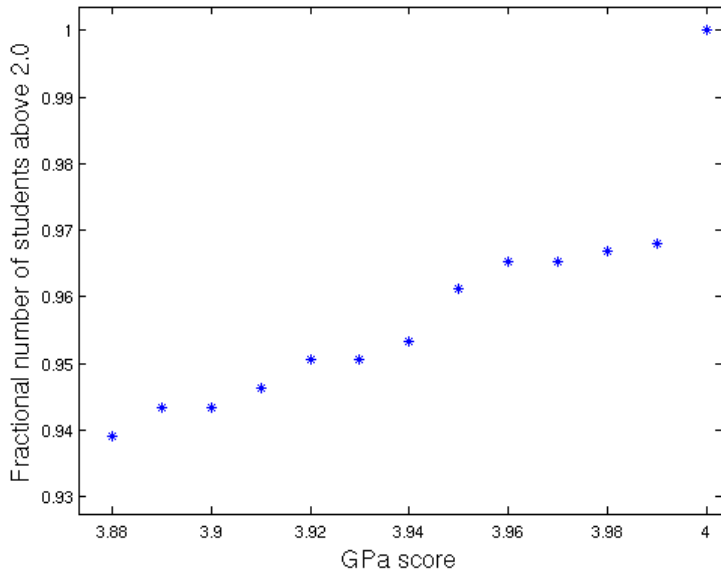


Figure 2: Zoom of data in figure 1 showing fraction of students above 3.9 GPA.

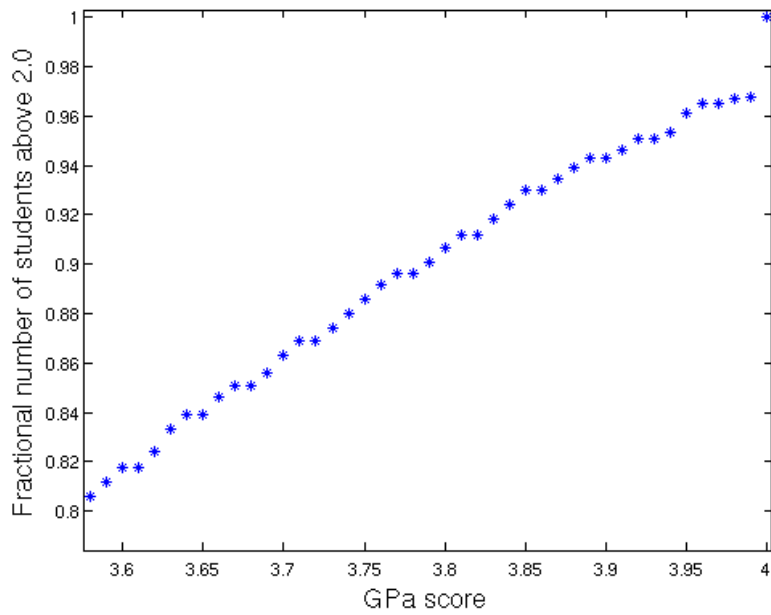


Figure 3: Fraction of graduating students above 3.6 GPA.

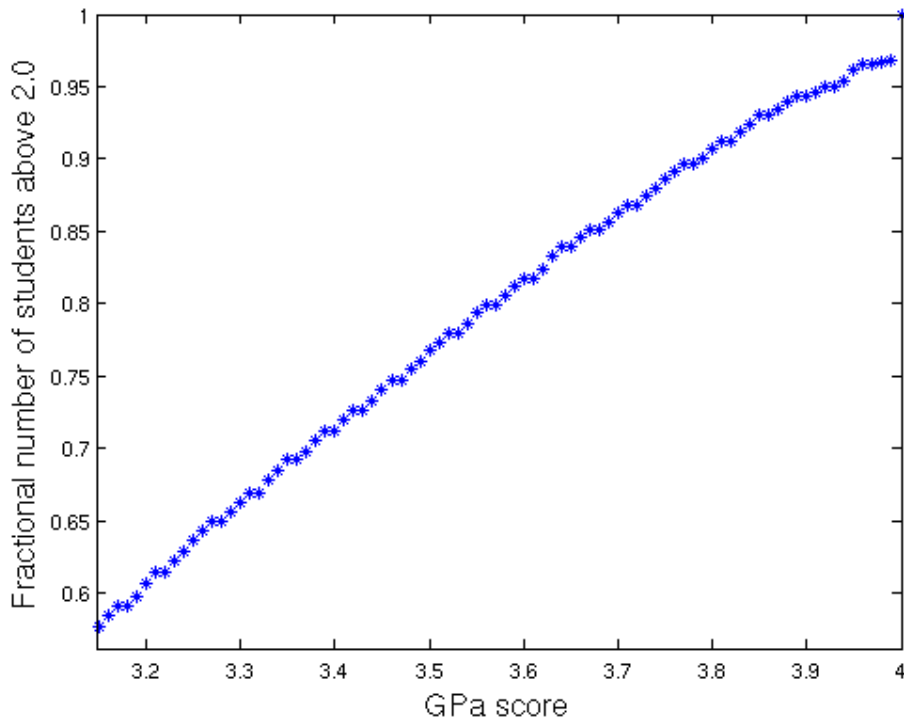


Figure 4: Fraction of students graduating with a GPA greater than 3.2.

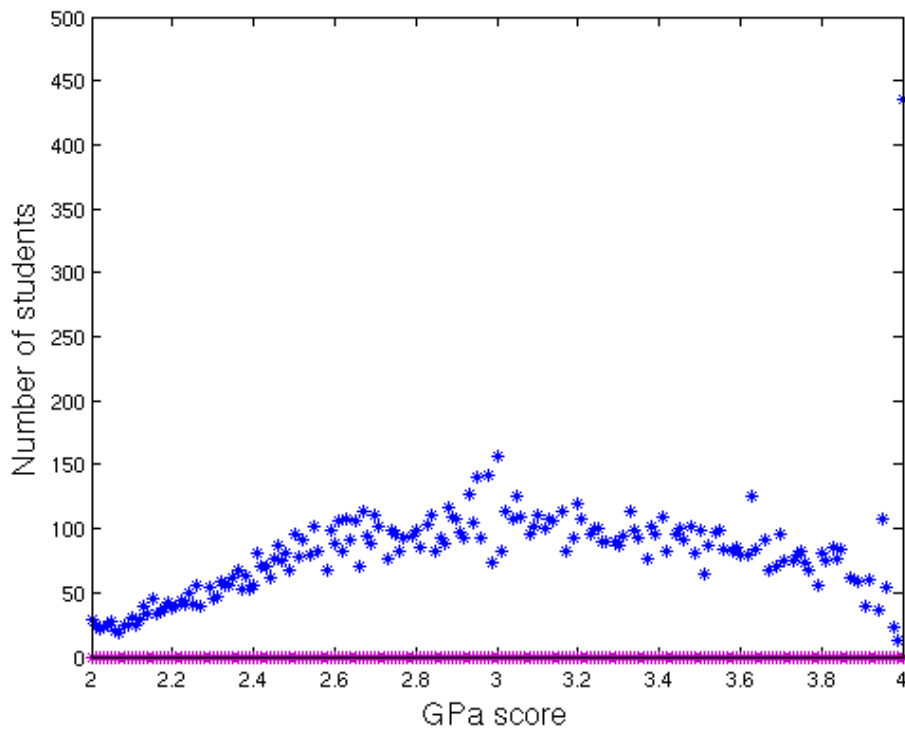


Figure 5: Numbers of graduating students at 0.01 GPA increments

Chapel Hill ([http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/aca\\_aff.html](http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/aca_aff.html) )

Students may earn one of two types of honors at UNC–Chapel Hill: distinction/highest distinction and honors/highest honors.

To graduate with distinction or with highest distinction, students must have completed at least 45 academic hours at UNC–Chapel Hill and have an overall grade point average of at least 3.500 or 3.800 respectively. The grade point average is based on the grades received and recorded by the Office of the University Registrar as of the degree award date. No changes are permitted to the awards after that date.

### **Appendix B: GPA distinction levels from other comparable institutions and published guidelines**

Organization	Cum laude	Magna	Summa
UNCC	3.4 – 3.8	3.8 – 4.0	4.0
	3.4 – 3.7	3.7 – 3.9	3.9 – 4.0
NCSU	3.25 – 3.5	3.5 – 3.75	3.75 – 4.0
Virginia Tech	3.4 – 3.6	3.6 – 3.8	3.8 – 4.0
Notre Dame	30%	5%	5%
Northwestern	12%	8%	5%
UNMexico	3.5 – 3.75	3.75 – 3.9	3.9 – 4.0
Texas A&M	3.5 – 3.7	3.7 – 3.9	3.9 – 4.0

## Appendix C: Percentage students receiving honors by department for the five semesters spanning Spring 2009 to Spring 2011 (more details can be found in the file Honors\_Smith-ModSTS6.xlsx held by S. T. Smith)

This table represents a survey carried out by Dr. S. T. Smith to collect student counts for honors on a department basis. Data was not available for all departments.

		<b>Total Graduating Count including UG/GR</b>					<b>Typical student numbers based on Fall 2011</b>			
		<b>2820</b>	<b>2472</b>	<b>2678</b>	<b>2252</b>	<b>2376</b>				
		<b>Spr 2011</b>	<b>Fall 2010</b>	<b>Spr 2010</b>	<b>Fall 2009</b>	<b>Spr 2009</b>				
<b>TERM SPRING 2011</b>										
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>HONOR</b>	<b>COUNT</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>COUNT</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Class size</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	
Accounting	Cum Laude	14	9	15	18	19	15	101	14.9	
Accounting	Magna Cum Laude	5	3	9	3	4	4.8	101	4.8	
Accounting	Summa Cum Laude	3	1	0	2	1	1.4	101	1.4	
Anthropology	Cum Laude	2	3	0	1	3	1.8	12	15.0	
Anthropology	Magna Cum Laude	1	1	2	1	2	1.4	12	11.7	
Art and Art History	Cum Laude	13	9	8	11	7	9.6	40	24.0	
Art and Art History	Magna Cum Laude	0	0	3	0	0	0.6	40	1.5	
Art and Art History	Summa Cum Laude	0	0	2	0	0	0.4	40	1.0	
Biology	Cum Laude	9	11	11	8	12	10.2	32	31.9	
Biology	Magna Cum Laude	4	2	5	2	5	3.6	32	11.3	
Biology	Summa Cum Laude	3	1	2	2	0	1.6	32	5.0	
Chemistry	Cum Laude	5	2	4	3	3	3.4	32	10.6	
Chemistry	Magna Cum Laude	3	0	4	0	1	1.6	32	5.0	
Chemistry	Summa Cum Laude	1	0	0	0	0	0.2	32	0.6	
Civil and Environmental Engr	Cum Laude	13	3	12	3	11	8.4	27	31.1	
Civil and Environmental Engr	Magna Cum Laude	5	0	1	1	4	2.2	27	8.1	
Civil and Environmental Engr	Summa Cum Laude	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	0.0	
Communication Studies	Cum Laude	9	4	11	10	10	8.8	118	7.5	
Communication Studies	Magna Cum Laude	1	2	2	1	2	1.6	118	1.4	
Communication Studies	Summa Cum Laude	1	0	0	0	0	0.2	118	0.2	



Computer Science	Cum Laude	9	5	6	3	7	6	36	16.7
Computer Science	Magna Cum Laude	3	2	2	1	0	1.6	36	4.4
Computer Science	Summa Cum Laude	0	1	1	0	0	0.4	36	1.1
Criminal Justice & Criminology	Cum Laude	12	6	10	7	7	8.4	128	6.6
Criminal Justice & Criminology	Magna Cum Laude	2	1	3	3	2	2.2	128	1.7
Criminal Justice & Criminology	Summa Cum Laude	1	1	1	0	1	0.8	128	0.6
Dance	Cum Laude	3	1	2	0	0	1.2	5	24.0
Dance	Magna Cum Laude	2	1	2	0	0	1	5	20.0
Economics	Cum Laude	6	6	2	5	1	4	27	14.8
Economics	Magna Cum Laude	3	0	0	0	2	1	27	3.7
Economics	Summa Cum Laude	2	0	0	0	1	0.6	27	2.2
Electrical and Computer Engr	Cum Laude	2	7	12	5	4	6	39	15.4
Electrical and Computer Engr	Magna Cum Laude	2	1	1	3	4	2.2	39	5.6
Electrical and Computer Engr	Summa Cum Laude	0	0	0	2	2	0.8	39	2.1
Engineering Tech & Const Mgmt	Cum Laude	6	0	1	0	2	1.8	14	12.9
Engineering Tech & Const Mgmt	Magna Cum Laude	2	0	0	1	1	0.8	14	5.7
Engineering Technology	Cum Laude	16	3	14	3	10	9.2	80	11.5
Engineering Technology	Magna Cum Laude	7	4	7	2	6	5.2	80	6.5
Engineering Technology	Summa Cum Laude	0	1	0	3	1	1	80	1.3
English	Cum Laude	9	4	18	6	9	9.2	52	17.7
English	Magna Cum Laude	5	5	9	5	6	6	52	11.5
English	Summa Cum Laude	3	1	3	1	4	2.4	52	4.6
Finance	Cum Laude	12	9	14	17	17	13.8	133	10.4
Finance	Magna Cum Laude	10	4	4	5	4	5.4	133	4.1
Finance	Summa Cum Laude	1	1	1	1	1	1	133	0.8
Geography and Earth Sciences	Cum Laude	6	5	4	5	7	5.4	13	41.5
Geography and Earth Sciences	Magna Cum Laude	1	2	1	1	1	1.2	13	9.2
Geography and Earth Sciences	Summa Cum Laude	0	0	0	3	0	0.6	13	4.6
History	Cum Laude	12	6	14	9	14	11	67	16.4
History	Magna Cum Laude	7	4	4	1	3	3.8	67	5.7
History	Summa Cum Laude	2	1	3	2	1	1.8	67	2.7
Management	Cum Laude	6	8	6	4	6	6	92	6.5
Management	Magna Cum Laude	3	1	1	1	3	1.8	92	2.0
Management	Summa Cum Laude	1	0	0	1	1	0.6	92	0.7
Marketing	Cum Laude	21	12	20	8	12	14.6	70	20.9

Marketing	Magna Cum Laude	7	2	6	0	0	3	70	4.3
Marketing	Summa Cum Laude	0	1	1	0	0	0.4	70	0.6
Mechanical Engineering	Cum Laude	13	7	7	3	10	8	64	12.5
Mechanical Engineering	Magna Cum Laude	5	3	6	1	7	4.4	64	6.9
Mechanical Engineering	Summa Cum Laude	0	0	0	0	0	0	64	0.0
Middle Grades, Sec Ed & K-12	Cum Laude	9	3	4	4	4	4.8	18	26.7
Middle Grades, Sec Ed & K-12	Magna Cum Laude	4	4	1	4	3	3.2	18	17.8
Middle Grades, Sec Ed & K-12	Summa Cum Laude	1	1	0	0	0	0.4	18	2.2
Music	Cum Laude	2	1	2	2	1	1.6	4	40.0
Music	Magna Cum Laude	4	1	2	3	1	2.2	4	55.0
Philosophy	Cum Laude	0	0	1	0	1	0.4	10	4.0
Philosophy	Magna Cum Laude	0	0	0	1	1	0.4	10	4.0
Philosophy	Summa Cum Laude	0	1	1	1	1	0.8	10	8.0
Physics and Optical Science	Cum Laude	2	2	2	2	3	2.2	16	13.8
Physics and Optical Science	Magna Cum Laude	1	1	2	0	1	1	16	6.3
Physics and Optical Science	Summa Cum Laude	1	1	0	0	1	0.6	16	3.8
Political Science	Cum Laude	8	2	9	1	8	5.6	82	6.8
Political Science	Magna Cum Laude	0	5	8	1	4	3.6	82	4.4
Political Science	Summa Cum Laude	1	0	2	0	0	0.6	82	0.7
Psychology	Cum Laude	25	14	27	14	34	22.8	112	20.4
Psychology	Magna Cum Laude	11	6	11	6	12	9.2	112	8.2
Psychology	Summa Cum Laude	4	0	3	0	4	2.2	112	2.0
Reading and Elementary Ed	Cum Laude	51	20	49	24	59	40.6	111	36.6
Reading and Elementary Ed	Magna Cum Laude	24	11	22	6	20	16.6	111	15.0
Reading and Elementary Ed	Summa Cum Laude	7	8	4	3	8	6	111	5.4
Religious Studies	Cum Laude	3	1	0	0	1	1	15	6.7
Religious Studies	Magna Cum Laude	3	0	0	0	2	1	15	6.7
Religious Studies	Summa Cum Laude	0	1	1	0	0	0.4	15	2.7
School of Architecture	Cum Laude	21	1	15	1	12	10	18	55.6
School of Architecture	Magna Cum Laude	2	0	3	0	1	1.2	18	6.7
School of Architecture	Summa Cum Laude	0	1	0	0	0	0.2	18	1.1
School of Nursing	Cum Laude	42	38	38	42	38	39.6	158	25.1
School of Nursing	Magna Cum Laude	7	7	11	9	12	9.2	158	5.8
School of Nursing	Summa Cum Laude	1	0	2	0	1	0.8	158	0.5
Sociology	Cum Laude	6	6	9	4	3	5.6	84	6.7

Sociology	Magna Cum Laude	1	2	1	3	3	2	84	2.4
Sociology	Summa Cum Laude	1	0	0	0	0	0.2	84	0.2
Software and Info Systems	Cum Laude	7	7	6	3	5	5.6	37	15.1
Software and Info Systems	Magna Cum Laude	3	1	2	0	1	1.4	37	3.8
Special Ed and Child Dev	Cum Laude	11	2	14	6	9	8.4	18	46.7
Special Ed and Child Dev	Magna Cum Laude	5	2	6	5	6	4.8	18	26.7
Special Ed and Child Dev	Summa Cum Laude	1	2	4	1	2	2	18	11.1
Theatre	Cum Laude	2	2	5	0	5	2.8	12	23.3
Theatre	Magna Cum Laude	1	0	1	0	3	1	12	8.3