

Great Basin College Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee

Written Committee Report

Meeting: 30 January 2015, 11:00 am

Location: Elko—HTC 121; Pahrump—PVC 115; Winnemucca—GBC 123

Present: Scott A. Gavorsky (Chair); Mike Elbert; Danny Gonzales; Dale Griffith; Doug Hogan; Jan King; Scott Nielsen; Diane Wrightman [quorum]

The following issues were discussed:

1) Graduation with Honors: The Committee reviewed the current Graduation With Honors policies in light of concerns both recent and long-standing concerning discrepancies between GBC and other institutions. The primary concern is that the requirement of 4.0 GPA for Summa Cum Laude is virtually impossible to obtain with the current grading scale (lacking an A-plus grade to offset an A-minus) and much higher than other NSHE institutions. The Committee took the following issues into account:

- Neither TMCC nor CSN offer the “cum laude” honors designation.
- WNC follows a model which requires a slightly higher initial GPA (3.6 rather than 3.5) for Cum Laude, but a 3.9 or higher for Summa Cum Laude.
- UNR requires an “A” on a Honors Thesis for Magna Cum Laude and Summa Cum Laude.
- UNLV varies by program, but most require an “A” on a Senior Thesis project for Summa Cum Laude.
- The Committee recommends the adoption of the GPA grade scale for distinctions used at UNR and UNLV, which matches the closest with GBC’s current scale.
- Given that GBC offers both Associate and Bachelor programs, the Committee felt that honors should differentiate between the two. A proposal was approved to require Bachelor students to achieve an “A” in their program’s Capstone course for Summa Cum Laude honors.
- Concerns were raised that not all Bachelor program had a Capstone course. The Committee Chair was tasked with contacting the Bachelor Program Supervisors to verify the existence of appropriate Capstone courses and to get feedback on the proposal.

ADDENDUM 1 — 10 February 2015

The Director of Admissions brought to the attention of the Committee via e-mail that the Graduation With Honors policies still listed 45 credits of upper-division course work, whereas the Faculty Senate has recently decided to set a lower limit of 42 credits of upper-division course work as the minimum. The Committee voted via e-mail to make the change to bring the policy in line with other GBC policies.

ADDENDUM 2 — 12 February 2015

As of 12 February 2015, six of the ten Bachelor Program supervisors agreed that using an “A” in a Capstone course defined by their departments as a requirement for Summa Cum Laude distinction would be acceptable and even welcome.

ACTION ITEM: The following text be inserted in the *2015-2016 General Catalog* in replacement of the current text for “Graduating With Honors” (page 56 of the *GBC 2014-2015 General Catalog*).

Graduating With Honors

During the May commencement ceremonies, GBC will distinguish certain graduates by categories of academic achievement based on cumulative grade-point average and other criteria, as follows:

	Cum Laude	Magna Cum Laude	Summa Cum Laude
Associates Degrees / Certificates	3.50 – 3.69	3.70 – 3.89	3.90 – 4.00
Bachelor’s Degrees	3.50 – 3.69	3.70 – 3.89	3.90 or higher AND A in program Capstone course*

* Students failing to earn an “A” in their program’s capstone course will be awarded Magna Cum Laude if the GPA is above 3.90.

- To earn honors designation for an associate’s degree or certificate of achievement, students must complete 45 credits at GBC, excluding developmental and community education courses.
- To earn honors designation for a bachelor’s degree, students must complete 42 upper-division credits at GBC.
- Credits transferred from other institutions will not be used toward calculating grade point average.

See additional graduation information under bachelor’s and associate’s degree requirements.

2) Non-Traditional Credit: In response to ongoing concerns that Non-Traditional Credit requests would become both more common and more problematic, the Committee examined policy concerning the granting of non-traditional credit. The following issues were of concern:

- Under current policies, students must have completed 15 credit hours before non-traditional credit would be assessed. The policy means students often must wait for a semester or longer, despite the fact that such credit might impact required courses and prerequisites.
- There is also the concern of “shopping,” where potential students might request assessment of non-traditional credit before enrolling in GBC. Such actions place an undue burden on Admissions and Records.
- The Committee voted that while students requesting non-traditional credit should commit to GBC, the current waiting period should be shortened to 12 credits (a full-time load) having been completed or being undertaken by the student. This change would allow full-time students to have non-traditional credit assessed during their first semester at GBC.

ADDENDUM 3 — 12 February 2015

While the recommended policy language was being finalized, it was noted that the current policy also requires all non-traditional credit to be “voted on by the full Faculty Senate” (*GBC 2014-2015 General Catalog*, page 21). This requirement raises significant questions on both time-commitment and FERPA grounds. A e-mail conversation among Committee members

recommend that non-traditional credit requests be reported to Faculty Senate as an information item, but not require a direct vote in each student's case.

ACTION ITEM: The following two text items be inserted in future *General Catalogs* in replacement of the current text under “How to Obtain Credit for Your Knowledge and Experience” (page 21 of the *GBC 2014-2015 General Catalog*). Items changed are highlighted.

A GBC faculty member in the appropriate discipline and the Academic Standards Committee of Faculty Senate will assess prior learning. **The result will then be reported to the full Faculty Senate as an information item.** Non-traditional forms of learning must be shown to be worthy of college credit. Learning which is certified by GBC for credit must be equivalent to the classroom experience.

Non-traditional education credit can only be applied toward an Associate of Applied Science, an Associate of General Studies, or a Certificate of Achievement. **The student must have completed or be undertaking 12 semester credits at GBC before non-traditional credit is considered.**

3) Non-Traditional / Exam Credit from Non-Accredited Sources: One issue that starting to impact student transfers is the increased use of proprietary testing and course services. These institutions allow students to take competency tests (such as CLEP exams) or even courses, but are not accredited by any agency. Currently, the Office of Admissions and Records has little to no guidance in identifying such institutions as “legitimate.” There is also the concern that a policy of too liberally granting credit to such institutions may raise accreditation issues for GBC.

The Director of Admissions reported that the situation is not unique to GBC, and current policy is for various NSHE institutions to contact each other to discuss whether this or that institution is accepted. Such policy is time-consuming and inefficient.

The Director of Admissions was asked to discuss the matter with the VPAA and our accrediting board for guidance. The Committee currently feels that such an issue really requires NSHE-level policy be devised, and will closely monitor events going forward.

Scott A. Gavorsky, Ph.D.
Chair, Academic Standards Committee

**Great Basin College Faculty Senate
Academic Standards Committee**

Action Item Requests for Faculty Senate, 20 February 2015

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