

Honors Plans - Summary Breakdown based on Granted Certificates/Degrees, 2012-2015 (19 February 2016)

HISTORY OF THE VARIOUS HONORS PLANS

In Spring 2015, Academic Standards proposed revising the Degree Honors standards. The primary concern at the time was the *summa cum laude* requirement of a perfect 4.0, which made GBC an outlier in NSHE and outside of Nevada. After discussion, Academic Standards recommended revising the GPAs needed for honors to follow the model used at UNR and UNLV: 3.50-3.69 for *cum laude*, 3.70-3.89 for *magna cum laude*, and 3.90-4.00 for *summa cum laude*. In addition, BA students would only be rewarded *summa cum laude* status if they also achieved an “A” in the capstone course (an idea approved by the program directors). The GBC Faculty Senate approved this plan 20 February 2015.

When the plan was presented at President’s Council in April 2015, the new GPA levels were accepted, but concerns about both the minimum credit hours necessary for Honors and whether certificates should be awarded Honors were raised. Academic Standards had not considered these issues, and had proposed leaving the existing language intact (45 credit hours at GBC for both certificates and associates, and 42 credit hours in upper-division classes at GBC). President’s Council offered two counter-proposals: lowering all requirements to 25% of total hours at GBC (so 15 hours for associates and 30 upper-division for BAs), and a second eliminating honors for certificates with 25% of total hours required for both associates and bachelors.

Academic Standards, in discussions in 2015 and Fall 2016, consistently has felt that the standard of 15 credit hours at GBC—one full semester—was insufficient to grant honors from GBC given that the GPA for transfer credit was not included. Moreover, it was felt that certificates should continue to be granted honors, since many of the current certificates require in excess of 30 credit hours. A counter-proposal was put together requiring a minimum of 30 credit hours at GBC for certificates and associates, and 30 upper-division credit hours at GBC for bachelors. The consensus was that such a minimum would adequately allow GBC to assess the long-term academic performance of students commensurate with the granting of honors from the institution.

The various Honors Plans are summarized below:

Summary of Proposed Honors Plans

Honors Plan	Minimum credit hours at GBC required			Minimum GPA required, by level		
	Certificates	Associates	Bachelors	cum laude	magna cum laude	summa cum laude
Current (2015-2016 Catalog, page 66)	45	45	42 upper-division	3.5	3.75	4.0
Model A (Academic Standards - 2015)	45	45	42 upper-division	3.5	3.7	3.9 (BA: + A in capstone)*
Model B1 (President’s Council)	15	15	30 upper-division	3.5	3.7	3.9 (BA: + A in capstone)*
Model B2 (President’s Council)	not eligible	15	30 upper-division	3.5	3.7	3.9 (BA: + A in capstone)*
Proposed (Academic Standards - 2016)	30	30	30 upper-division	3.5	3.7	3.9 (BA: + A in capstone)*

* BA students not receiving an A in the departmental capstone course but with a GPA higher than 3.90 would receive *magna cum laude* honors.

In order to assess the potential impact of these various plans, it was decided to apply the models to the granted certificate and degree data of the last three years.

METHODOLOGY

The following data is based on an analysis of the certificate and degree data provided by the Student Services Office for 2012 through 2015. The various models were applied to the data, particularly eligibility based on credit hours as dictated by the various plans.

A few notes:

- Total number of certificates or degrees awarded across period: 1137 (multiple degrees by single recipients included separately)
- Total number of certificates/degrees eligible for Honors by GPA (3.5 GPA or higher): 389
- Total number of students eligible for one or more Honors by GPA (3.5 GPA or higher): 365
- BA degrees based on total hours (upper-division course hours NOT separated in breakdown)
- BA *summa cum laude* does NOT include capstone course grades.
- “Credit Hours Model” given as: Certificates included? / Hours needed for CT-Associates / Upper-division hours needed for Bachelors

Honors Plans	Eligibility for Honors (credit hours)		Honors Granted, by level			Total Honors Certs/Degrees	% Honors / All C/Ds	Summa totals	
	Credit Hours Model	% All C/Ds	Laude	Magna	Summa			% Honors	# BA
Current	CT / 45 / 42 u-d	92.3%	182	152	7	341	30.0%	2.1%	2
Model A	CT / 45 / 42 u-d	92.3%	150	131	60	341	30.0%	17.6%	15
Model B1	CT / 15 / 30 u-d	99.6%	166	145	78	389	34.2%	20.1%	15
Model B2	no CT / 15 / 30 u-d	84.0%	146	135	66	347	30.5%	19.0%	15
Proposed	CT / 30 / 30 u-d	97.4%	161	142	74	377	33.2%	19.6%	15

Notes:

- Model A (original proposal by Academic Standards) would solve the initial issue of limited *summa cum laude* honors, as would the other models.
- Model B1 (proposal by President’s Council) would effectively render all graduating students eligible for honors based on credit hour requirements if they met the GPA requirements for classes taken at GBC.
- The numbers of BA students earning *summa cum laude* is consistent across all models, although the A in the capstone requirement would reduce this number a bit (but only a small amount).

CONCLUSION

Based on this data, the Academic Standards Committee recommends the following:

- The GPA model approved by Faculty Senate last February be adopted.
- Certificates continued to be allowed to earn honors designations.
- Minimum required credit hours for honors be 30 credit hours for certificates/associates degrees, and 30 upper-division credit hours for bachelors.

The language to be included in the General Catalog 2016-2017 is given on the next page.

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

**Action Items
Faculty Senate, 26 February 2016**

ACTION ITEM 1: The following text be inserted in future *General Catalogs* in replacement of the current text for “Graduating With Honors” (page 66 of the *GBC 2015-2016 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
Associate’s 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 30 credits at GBC, excluding developmental and community education courses.
- To earn honors designation for a bachelor’s degree, students must complete 30 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.