

November 11, 2009

To: Senate

From: Donald Russell, Chair of SCASP

RE: Recognition of Exceptional Achievement at Graduation

Throughout the last year, SCASP has circulated to faculty boards a proposal altering the way students are recognized for outstanding academic achievement at graduation. Under this proposal, students graduating with an overall CGPA of 10.40 or higher would graduate with the designation High Distinction, while students graduating with an overall CGPA of less than 10.40 and greater than or equal to 9.80 would graduate with the designation Distinction. The proposal emerged from concerns that the number of students being recognized for outstanding academic achievement at graduation has grown so large that its significance has been devalued and that Carleton has become an outlier among Ontario universities. In 1990, 18% of graduating students were recognized for exceptional academic performance. By 2000, the percentage had risen to 29% and this year it is 35%.

Response from faculty boards has been positive. The faculty boards have been unanimous in supporting the need to find a new and more stringent rule, the desire to retain two levels of recognition, and the use of a uniform rule for all students. Some faculty boards also suggested that SCASP consider even higher cutoffs or that we round off to "even" numbers. SCASP is recommending against these changes for two reasons. First, any change in the cutoffs (10.4 and 9.8), even in one decimal place, has the potential to affect large numbers of students negatively. The values 10.4 and 9.8 were selected after careful modeling involving the overall grade point averages of the graduating class and the desired percentage of students to be recognized at graduation. With these new standards, the percentage of students recognized for exceptional academic performance will be about 20%. Second, any new designations need to accord with the University's recognition system for exceptional achievement. Since the University awards medals with a minimum cutoff of 10.6 and since High Distinction should rank below a medal, it is difficult to see how the cutoff of 10.4 can be raised.

Motion 1: that Senate approves the revised Regulation 8.4 that follows to replace the current regulations for awarding High Honours, Highest Honours, Distinction and High Distinction:

Graduating students in any undergraduate degree will have exceptional academic achievement recognized if the student:

- 1. Has completed at least 10.0 credits toward the degree at Carleton University, and;**
- 2. For the designation *High Distinction*, has an Overall CGPA greater than or equal to 10.40;**
- 3. For the designation *Distinction*, has an Overall CGPA less than 10.40 and greater than or equal to 9.80.**

These recognitions of exceptional merit will be recorded on the student's transcript and diploma.

Implementation

If we follow our normal practice, these new regulations would apply to students admitted under the 2010 calendar or later. This would lead, as early as June 2012, to convocations with mixed systems of recognition. This mixing of systems could continue for many years as students sometimes interrupt their studies for several years and return under their original calendar. SCASP is recommending a transition policy that would allow students to graduate for the four years after September 2010 using the regulation of their calendar. Then starting in Spring 2014, all graduating students would use the new regulations. This would reduce the period with mixed systems at graduation to two years.

Motion 2: that Senate approves the transition protocol for the revised Distinction Regulation 8.4 as follows:

1. Students admitted in September 2010 and after will graduate under the revised regulation
2. Students graduating in Spring 2014 and after will be subject to the revised regulation.