Report from the Academic Standing and Honors Committee

The Committee on Academic Standing and Honors met twice to discuss students that had to be considered for the various levels of probation. It met three additional times, before each graduation, to consider students that could be nominated for Summa Cum Laude and subsequently voted on by the Faculty.

The Committee also discussed the criteria for nominating candidates and granting them Summa and would like to involve the entire Faculty and in particular Departments and Programs in this discussion.

Current criteria are a G.P.A. of at least 3.75, at least six grades of A- or better in the major and normally a grade of A- or better in each of the distribution areas. These rules are purely numerical and do not take into account how challenging the program of study has been. As such, they reward students that take the path of least resistance towards satisfaction of the requirements for graduation.

The Committee believes that a thorough revision of the criteria should involve two components:

1) There should be some general criteria that would guarantee that a student has achieved some “depth in the breadth”, outside his or her own major. An option suggested by the Committee is that certain introductory courses could not be counted as part of the A’s in each distribution area.

2) Individual Departments and Programs should set standards for their Summa nominees that would normally go well beyond the minimum expected from a major. Examples of these already exist, as some of the Science and Social Science Departments require a research component or major paper from their majors before nominating them for Summa. Other possibilities, like requiring a certain number of advanced courses, participating in a seminar or writing a senior thesis may be more suitable in other disciplines.

The Committee hopes to receive feedback from Departments and Programs and to be able to make a more concrete proposal on the necessary changes to the current status quo.

For the Academic Standing and Honors Committee

Montserrat Teixidor i Bigas
Chair