LA&J Committee on Academic Standing and Honors
submitted by co-Chairs Associate Professor Kelly A. McLaughlin and Professor Sam Sommers
2017-2018 annual report

Academic Standing and Honors Committee summary for action items for 2017-2018 year (faculty and representatives from the Office of Academic Advising and Undergraduate Studies were included in discussions/meetings):

**September 22, 2017:** During this meeting Kelly McLaughlin and Sam Sommers agreed to serve as co-chairs 2017-2018 and an overview of committee purpose and time-frames of committee work for academic standing and Latin honors was discussed. The committee examined the existing academic standing criteria and discussed a problem the Advising Deans have noticed with students who have a GPA that keeps them above the academic probation threshold - but who have fallen seriously short of progress to degree in terms of credits earned. Falling behind on credits means that a student is in jeopardy of losing federal financial aid. Further, financial aid is given for only 8 semesters, so if a student takes more than 8 semesters to complete their degree, they may have invested much time, money, and debt with no degree. Students (and their families) expect to graduate after 4 years, so if a student is not making progress to that goal, it is in their best interests that they are notified sooner rather than later. The committee discussed possible mechanisms to help better inform students at risk. One option discussed in detail was the possibility that students in serious failure to make progress toward the degree in terms of credits earned should merit Academic Probation. Note: Academic Probation means that a student is not eligible to participate in some extracurricular activities (such as varsity sports), so this could be a motivator to keep students on track; Academic Probation letters are also sent home, so parents/guardians would be alerted about a student who will take more than 4 years to graduate. The committee voted to approve via email Oct. 2017 (Vote was to approve was for a “pilot” spring 2018 policy - with no actual consequences for the students, other than a stern notice). The official policy goes into effect starting Fall 2018 (with conversion to semester-hour units). The main change to the existing policy is that a student who has fallen seriously behind on number of credits earned will be placed on Academic Probation. New policy to be listed in 2018-2019 Student Bulletin.

**January 11, 2018** (academic standing meeting to discuss Fall 2017 semester). Committee discussion of candidates recommended for Summa honors (Feb. 2018 graduation).

**April 25, 2018:** The LA&J Committee on Academic Standing and Honors met and discussed and voted to alter the current Dean’s List criteria for Liberal Art undergraduates. Sam Sommers and Kelly McLaughlin (committee co-chairs) presented the revised Dean’s List proposal to the A&S faculty on May 9, 2018. Vote by faculty was to approve the revised requirements listed below starting Fall 2018. New policy to be listed in 2018-2019 Student Bulletin.

**Fall 2018 NEW POLICY FOR DEAN’S LIST:** “Each semester, students who have been enrolled with a minimum of 12 semester hours, received letter grades in a minimum of 12 semester hours with no work incomplete, and earned a minimum grade point average of 3.40 in the College of Liberal Arts will be placed on the Dean’s List in recognition of their academic achievement. An indication of Dean’s List status will be placed on their permanent record. Students in the combined-degree program with the New England Conservatory of Music whose total course load equals 12 semester hours or more will be awarded Dean’s List honors at both institutions if they meet Dean’s List GPA requirements at both institutions. Students in the BA/BFA combined-degree program with the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts whose total course load equals 12 semester hours or more will be awarded Dean’s List honors if they meet Dean’s List GPA requirements.”
May 16, 2018: Latin Honors meeting discussion for senior graduating May 2018 or August 2018.

May 17, 2018: Latin honors students presented to faculty at faculty meeting and vote taken for approval.

May 18, 2018: Joint meeting of the LA&J Committee on Academic Standing and Honors with and the Engineering Committee on Academic Standing and Honors. Presentation by Jennifer Stephan (Senior Associate Dean of Undergraduate Advising/School of Engineering) followed by a discussion of academic policies identified by the Mental Health Task Force Committee (focus on academic standing criteria and academic progress policies and related financial aid implications for student success across schools). Committee approved new policy to be communicated to the Faculty Executive Committee and put in place for the 2018-2019 academic year. New policy to be listed in 2018-2019 Student Bulletin.

Online approve implementation: Over the past two years the Committee has worked with Student Services to roll out a new electronic process for collecting department recommendations for Summa and Magna honors. This academic year, the new electronic forms were used in a pilot for February 2018 graduates, with the full roll out complete for May 2018 graduates.