March 18, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Stuart Lau, University Registrar
    Office of the Registrar

FROM: Reed Dasenbrock
      Vice Chancellor
      for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Graduation with Distinction

As you know, the Mānoa Faculty Senate has recently approved a motion to recognize students with high academic achievement during graduation ceremonies as well as have the designations *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *summa cum laude*, be recorded on diplomas and transcripts (see attached). With the faculty's consensus, I am writing to request that effective Fall 2011, the current designation, "graduation with distinction" on diplomas and transcripts be discontinued and instead, the recommended three designations mentioned above, be recorded on our students' official records.

If you have questions, please contact my office at 956-8447. Mahalo.

Attachment

c: Chancellor Hinshaw
   Vice Chancellor Hernandez
   Vice Chancellor Ostrander
   Mānoa Deans and Directors
March 17, 2011

TO: Virginia Hinshaw, Chancellor
    University of Hawai‘i at Manoa

    Reed Dasenbrock, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs ✓
    University of Hawai‘i at Manoa

FROM: David Duffy, Vice Chair
      Mānoa Faculty Senate

RE: Motion to Recognize Students with High Academic Achievement during Graduation Ceremony

The Motion to Recognize Students with High Academic Achievement during Graduation Ceremony was unanimously approved by the Mānoa Faculty Senate at the March 16, 2011 Senate meeting. The motion is attached.

The Committee on Academic Policy and Planning (CAPP) reviewed this issue and provided a report to the Senate at the March 16, 2011 Senate meeting. The committee report and deliberations can be viewed by accessing CAPP’s meeting minutes at http://www.hawaii.edu/uhtmfs/minutes/2010_11/index.html#capp.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.
Motion to Recognize Students with High Academic Achievement during Graduation Ceremony

Although the Mānoa Faculty Senate acknowledges that the final Grade Point Average will not be available at the time of graduation, it supports the proposal to replace the single “Graduation with Distinction” designation with a standard tripartite designation of cum laude, magna cum laude, and summa cum laude as follows:

3.5-3.74 GPA: cum laude
3.75-3.9 GPA: magna cum laude
>3.9 GPA: summa cum laude

The Mānoa Faculty Senate further recommends that the designations be recorded on the diploma and transcript.

David Cameron Duffy, Ph.D., Vice Chair of the Mānoa Faculty Senate
For Susan K. Hippensteele, Ph.D, J.D., Chair of the Mānoa Faculty Senate

Halina M. Zaleski, Ph.D., Secretary of the Mānoa Faculty Senate
Graduating with Distinction

One of the challenges faced by the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa is how we can offer and be perceived as offering a high quality undergraduate education for the students from the state of Hawai‘i who are looking for the best education they can afford. Over the past generation, we have lost ground in addressing that challenge, as an increasing percentage of the state’s high school graduates leave the state for an education on the mainland. Many never return. It is therefore of the utmost importance for the state that along with programs aimed at access which bring in more of the population into higher education, we also develop programs aimed at excellence, which keep more of the state’s students here at home.

We have related issues with retention. The issue of retaining students is usually framed in terms of students failing to succeed in their studies, therefore is framed as part of the access agenda, but we know that many students who transfer from Mānoa to other universities say that they are doing so because they don’t think they are sufficiently challenged by the education they are receiving. So we need a strategy aimed at creating high-quality and rigorous undergraduate education as well as doing what we can to increase student access and success.

Graduation is a crucial moment to recognize high-achieving students in a context that expresses the values of the institution. At present, while we recognize students in the Honors Program and recognize a variety of forms of student engagement, the only recognition of general academic achievement is that all students with GPAs of above 3.5 are recognized as having graduated “with distinction.” At comparable institutions, this level of achievement tends to be a floor, not the only form of recognition, as the common structure is all students above a 3.5 are recognized as graduating “cum laude” with two additional levels of recognition, “magna cum laude” and summa cum laude.” Our proposal is that we replace the single graduating “with distinction” with this standard tripartite designation:

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\begin{align*}
3.5 – 3.74 \text{ GPA} &= \text{cum laude} \\
3.75 – 3.9 \text{ GPA} &= \text{magna cum laude} \\
> 3.9 &= \text{summa cum laude}
\end{align*}
\]

This would, we believe, be a small but noticeable step towards recognizing academic achievement.