

Faculty Senate Resolution #13-23

Approved by the Faculty Senate: February 26, 2013

Approved by the Chancellor: April 2, 2013

Report on Policy on Awarding Undergraduate Degrees with Distinction

Introduction

On September 27, 2012, Mark Sprague, Chair of the Faculty, assigned the Admission and Retention Policies Committee to “review current graduation policies and consider how they may unfairly disqualify students engaged in online learning to graduate with honors.” After reviewing this policy, the Admission and Retention Policies Committee recommends that the current ECU Policy on Degrees with Distinction (<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/registrar/GraduationHonors.cfm>) be retained as is.

Current Policy

The current ECU policy on awarding undergraduate degrees with distinction can be found in the University Undergraduate Catalog, in the section titled: Undergraduate Studies: Academic Advisement, Progression and Support Services: Degrees with Distinction. This policy includes the requirement that “The student must complete through enrollment in East Carolina University at least one-half the minimum number of hours required for the degree.” The policy does not distinguish between online credit hours and those taken on campus.

This stipulation has resulted in a number of appeals over the years from graduating transfer students who compiled excellent academic records but did not earn at least half of their credits while enrolled at ECU. The Admission and Retention Policies Committee examined this question in 2005 and again in 2011, each time deciding against recommending a change.

Committee Analysis

After receiving Dr. Sprague’s charge, the committee discussed the issue of the minimum number of ECU credit hours required to graduate with distinction at our October 2012 and January 2013 meetings. At our January meeting, we decided to study the policies of ECU’s peer institutions and select UNC-system institutions regarding minimum credit hours for awarding such honors. The following chart shows the minimum semester hours in residence required by each institution in order to earn a degree with distinction:

Ohio University	30 hours
Florida International University	40 hours
Virginia Commonwealth University	45 hours
Wright State University	45 hours
UNC-Greensboro	45 hours
UNC-Charlotte	48 hours
University of North Dakota	50 hours
Appalachian State University	4 semesters full time OR 58 hours
Texas Tech University	1/2 of degree credit
Virginia Tech University	60 hours
Old Dominion University	60 hours
University of Missouri at Kansas City	60 hours
University of Louisville	60 hours
Northern Illinois University	60 hours
University of Buffalo	60 hours
University of South Carolina	60 hours

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee	60 hours
-------------------------------------	----------

In all cases, semester hours are being reported even if the university listed is on a quarter system. Some schools have provisions for including transfer hours (using expanded calculations) and some schools distinguish between pass/fail or other special courses, such as practicum hours, but these are not listed above.

Based on the above thresholds for achieving distinction, our policy is in line with our peer institutions' policies. **Therefore, the Admissions and Retention Policies Committee recommends leaving the current policy unchanged. The committee encourages individual programs or departments to explore their own departmental honors to recognize high achieving students who do not meet ECU's requirements for degrees with distinction.**