

26 August 2021

To: Dr. Aaron Cramer, University of Kentucky University Senate Council Chair

From: Dr. Jennifer Bird-Pollan, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Rosenberg College of Law, on behalf of the Rosenberg College of Law Faculty

The University of Kentucky J. David Rosenberg College of Law faculty request an amendment of Senate Rule 5.5.2.2 related to the “Conditions of Merit and Circumstance for Degree Honors.” The Latin Honors of *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *summa cum laude* are important recognitions of achievement in the legal community. The law faculty would like to continue to offer these recognitions to students who graduate with cumulative GPAs in their law degrees of 3.4, 3.6, and 3.8. However, because of the evolving nature of legal education, the growing number experiential courses graded on a pass/fail basis, and the growing number of students who participate in dual degree programs, the law faculty have voted to eliminate the minimum number of graded credits required to earn Latin Honors upon graduation with a J.D. degree.

The faculty had a robust discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of such a rule change. Eliminating the minimum number of graded hours for Latin Honors opens the possibility of additional students earning these honors, but there are guardrails within our own faculty rules that will limit the total number of pass/fail credit hours that any law student can take. More specifically, law students can use no more than 9 hours of pass/fail credits within the law school towards their graduation requirements, no more than 6 hours of pass/fail credits from other Colleges on campus, with a *total* of no more than 12 hours of pass/fail credits altogether. No law student can graduate with pass/fail credits in excess of that number. However, transfer students who come in with approximately 30 ungraded credit hours will only take 60 credit hours at Rosenberg Law, up to 12 of which could be pass/fail, under the parameters described above. Under the current rule, transfer students are ineligible for Latin Honors, but changing the rule to permit students with the required GPA to earn Latin Honors regardless of the number of graded hours the student has will allow transfer students to get this recognition, if their work at UK Rosenberg Law justifies it. In addition, our dual degree students, whose

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required credit hours are lower than the full 90 hours required for the traditional J.D. degree¹, will now be eligible for Latin Honors on the basis of their grades, even when they participate in important co-curricular and curricular opportunities that are graded on a pass/fail basis.

The law faculty voted unanimously in favor of this change in a faculty meeting on 26 August 2021. We ask the University Senate to amend Senate Rule 5.5.2.2. We propose the insertion of a new paragraph, Senate Rule 5.5.2.2.1, which should read as follows:

“The Rosenberg College of Law awards Latin Honors as follows: students with a grade point average of 3.8 or higher will be graduated Summa Cum Laude; students with a grade point average of 3.6 or higher will be graduated Magna Cum Laude; students with a grade point average of 3.4 or higher will be graduated Cum Laude. Latin Honors will be awarded regardless of the number of graded credit hours (i.e. quality hours) earned by the student.”

¹ The Rosenberg College of Law credit hour requirements for the joint degrees are as follows: JD-MBA requires 71 law hours, JD-MHA requires 78-79 law hours, JD-MPA requires 81 law hours, JD-MA (Diplomacy) requires 87 law credit hours.

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5.5.2.2 Conditions of Merit and Circumstance for Degree Honors

Students shall be graduated "Summa Cum Laude" who attain a grade point average of 3.8 or higher for at least three years of work at the University of Kentucky (excepting correspondence study). [US: 10/11/94; US: 4/11/94]

Students shall be graduated "Magna Cum Laude" who attain a grade point average of 3.6 or higher for at least three years of work at the University of Kentucky (excepting correspondence study). [US: 4/11/94]

Students shall be graduated "Cum Laude" who attain a grade point average of 3.4 to 3.6 for at least three years of work at the University of Kentucky (excepting correspondence study). [US: 4/11/94]

Students with a minimum of two but less than three years of work at the University shall receive the appropriate commencement honors if they attain a grade point average of 0.2 greater than the above.

- * Courses taken under the Study Abroad and National Exchange Student programs (and for which students pay their tuition to the University of Kentucky) are considered as courses taken at UK for purposes of both the residency requirement of SR [3.1.1.1](#) and for graduates to be conferred commencement honors at the time of award of their degrees under SR 5.5.2.2. [SREC: 2/14/01; SREC: 5/31/2005]

The degree with honors from a professional college shall be based solely upon work done in the professional college.

The bachelor's degree with honors in a student's major or a degree with honors from a professional college will be conferred upon a student whom the faculty of the student's department, or college in the case of a professional college, and the dean of the student's college recommend receive the degree. A student may be required to complete work in addition to that required for the bachelor's or professional degree to receive a degree with honors. [US: 12/13/82]

All students in the Honors Program of the University who do not have a grade point standing of 3.5 or better but are in the top ten percent (10%) of their college's class are eligible to graduate in the Honors Program if they satisfy the other requirements and have approval of the Honors Program Director.

- * A student who has invoked the academic bankruptcy rule (SR [5.4.1.5](#)) during his/her University career shall be considered, for the purposes of commencement honors, as having attended the University only for those hours earned subsequent to readmission. [SREC: 6/21/83]
- * A student need not be enrolled full-time to fulfill the years of work necessary to receive commencement honors. Two years of work means 60 credit hours; three years means 90 credits. [SREC: 5/8/85]
- * ~~Under this rule, the cumulative GPA is used to test for qualification for graduation honors, and the minimum number of credit hours that must be included in that GPA~~

calculation (i.e. quality hours) is 90 hours. However, for historical reasons, the minimum number of credit hours that must be included in the GPA calculation for students earning JD or PharmD degrees is 75% of the minimum number of credit hours required for the degree [SREC: 2/24/2006; 9/9/2019]

- * A student does not have to be a full-time student to be eligible for qualifying for graduation honors. [SREC: 2/24/2006]

5.5.2.2.1 Degree Honors in the University of Kentucky J. David Rosenberg College of Law

The Rosenberg College of Law awards Latin Honors as follows: students with a grade point average of 3.8 or higher will be graduated Summa Cum Laude; students with a grade point average of 3.6 or higher will be graduated Magna Cum Laude; students with a grade point average of 3.4 or higher will be graduated Cum Laude. Latin Honors will be awarded regardless of the number of graded credit hours (i.e. quality hours) earned by the student. [US: DATE]