

MEMORANDUM

TO: Steering Committee

FROM: Committee on Academic Programs (CAP)

RE: Final Recommendation on policy on Undergraduate Departmental Honors

DATE: December 13, 2017

Background and Charge:

According to TCNJ policy (the Policy Framework), all campus policies should be reviewed every five years. The Departmental Honors Policy has not been reviewed since 2004. Steering charged CAP with reviewing this policy to ensure that it is consistent with current practice and to make any other changes to the policy that CAP deems appropriate. In addition, Steering asked CAP to consider a report issued by a task force in 2003-2004 that called for the development of clear and consistent guidelines for departmental honors.

Method:

CAP reviewed the existing Departmental Honors policy, as well as the task force report, and decided that the existing policy lacked substantive guidance on how a departmental honors program should be established and administrated. CAP reviewed the AY 2017-2018 bulletin and TCNJ's web pages for programs that described departmental honors programs in order to determine how existing programs are structured. This review identified several key components of honors programs: 1) an application process; 2) significant advanced work (multi class and/or multi-semester project); and 3) assessment of student work product by multiple faculty members.

CAP developed a draft policy based on this review and several meetings with specific departments. The draft policy was offered for comment to the Academic Leaders group and subsequently specifically sent to the departments with identified departmental honors programs. Two departments have current policies that do not comply with the proposed policy, but in communicating with these departments, it was concluded that these issues are easily addressed with very minor changes in practice. No other substantive issues with the policy were raised.

One item of note was a request to have a clear method for communicating granted honors status to Records and Registration. CAP feels that procedural guidance should not be included in policy statements and has therefore requested that Records and Registration develop and communicate a process to the academic community.

CAP unanimously voted to approve the revised policy.

Final Recommendation:

The revised policy includes the following additions/changes:

- 1) The title of the policy is changed to Undergraduate Departmental Honors, to clarify that this policy only applies to undergraduate students.

- 2) Clarification of the distinction between departmental honors, honors program, and Latin honors.
- 3) Departments and programs must have codified processes for admittance to the departmental honors program
- 4) Work sufficient for honors consideration will take place over multiple semesters and/or consist of multiple course units. Candidates' work should be documented in a comprehensive thesis or other permanent media appropriate to the work and departmental requirements.
- 5) Departmental honors must be determined by a cross-section of department faculty.
- 6) Standards and processes for awarding departmental honors must be reviewed and recommended through appropriate curricular governance processes within the academic unit (i.e., Department and School curriculum committees)
- 7) All standards and processes for determining departmental honors must be publicly available and published on the department or program's website and in the TCNJ Undergraduate Bulletin.

CAP proposes that this revised policy be effective starting in Fall 2018.

CAP also suggests that Steering shares this policy with GPC, so that they can evaluate whether to create a similar honors policy for graduate students.