

Proposal for Honor Graduate Awards

Historical Numbers for Summa Cum Laude Graduates (highest honors):

2019 - 6

2020 - 7

2021 - 5

2022 - 11

2023 - 13

2024 - 22 (55 students received the Cum Laude cord out of 131 graduates)

We have a unique "problem" in that there are an increasing number of Summa Cum Laude graduates. This is due directly to the number of ICC classes that students take has increased due to ICC's new eight week model where students have to take 2 classes per period in a semester.

We are discussing increasing the thresholds for each designation, and we know that requires school board approval and board policy change.

It seems the rankings are inverse to what they typically are. We have more Summas than Magnas or Cum Laudes. This number of Summas has quadrupled since 2019. Along with the cost, it seems there is less of an honor when almost 20% of the graduating class has the designation.

Another issue is the cost of Honor Graduate regalia. Over one quarter of the graduation budget will be to buy Summa Cum Laude graduate regalia for this year. This does not include the additional cost of Cum Laude and Magna Cum Laude regalia.

Our conversation is around whether to work around GPA numbers or around a percentage of the graduating cohort for each designation.

Our proposal is to work with a percentage model:

Summa - top 5%

Magna - top 10%

Cum Laude - top 15% (weighted) top 5% (unweighted)

We leave the Board to decide whether we start the new process with the Class of 2025 or the Class of 2028, incoming Freshmen. Our thought is it may be best to begin immediately, as there will be push back either way.

Proposal on limitations of CCP for PCHS (ie. online or in person ICC courses)

The change in ICC/CCP classes, wherein currently they can take up to 72 hours, which does not include the potential hours in Summer classes to get ahead. This is the worst part of the issue, as this directly affects our school electives, particularly CTE courses. This along with the

new decision from NC Public Colleges and Universities to drop foreign language requirements for admission. An important part of our job, right now, is to prohibit this rush for CCP classes and credits earned to protect the school including students, parents, teachers, and programs that we offer. This increase in courses taken does not translate to early college graduation. Colleges and universities only allow a finite number of classes to count toward student majors, and the rest are attributed to electives. The information we have illustrates most students will only be ahead by one semester, at best one year, which is doable with no incoming college credit hours.

The current system compels students and parents to opt out of AP classes and electives including Foreign Language courses to play the GPA game that points toward CCP classes. This “game” incentivises students to find a way to take one more college course than their classmates in order to rise to the top of their class. We have created a system that panders to students and families that know how to play this game, which creates an inequitable playing field.

We propose the following:

- Limit the number of CCP courses that count in a student’s GPA as follows: 8 college courses, for a total of 24 total hours. Additional courses could be taken beyond this number, but would not count in the students GPA calculation. This would show on their high school transcript as a grade of “P”.
- Furthermore, students would no longer be allowed to take CCP courses to replace high school graduation required courses.
- Lastly we propose that taking CCP courses during the Summer should not count in students’ GPA calculations for various reasons. Students who don’t have internet access, students who work, or students who have athletics or other extracurriculars during the summer are not able to take these courses.

We believe implementing this with the rising Junior Class could be done without giving any students an unfair advantage with regard to GPA and ranking. This would incentivize students to take AP Courses and at the same time allow them to take PCHS elective courses they would want to take without sacrificing their class standing.

The second issue regarding the CCP classes is clear; taking 8-week community college classes does not prepare students for the rigor of university classes as well as AP and Honors classes at the high school level. The new 8-week model is a way for the community colleges to pad their numbers in classes available and taught, as well as money earned by ADM and tuition. Students have acknowledged that many of these courses are watered-down and/or invite cheating.

There is good news regarding this issue. For students who want to take more CCP classes, this is an excellent opportunity to increase ADM at Polk County Early College.