

Beat: Admin. and Student Gov.

Headline: Seniors! Plan to graduate with honors?

Byline: Nicole Gamble

Story:

Congratulations on reaching honors for the Spring 2016 semester. However, graduation honor cords will only be available to students who reached honors prior to Spring semester.

Students who haven't reached the GPA for honors before the Spring 2016 semester will not walk with honor cords at the Spring, Summer or Fall 2016 graduations.

Not so fast, seniors—just because honors at graduation will be based off of Fall semester doesn't mean senioritis can take over during Spring semester. Students who drop their GPA during the Spring semester will lose honors.

Spring graduation will be held at the end of April due to a change in the academic calendar.

On Sept. 28, an email was sent to all prospective graduates by Mindy Wennergren, the registrar at Westminster College. The email announced the GPA qualifications for honors in the upcoming graduation(s) and how honors will be based on GPAs earned at the end of Fall 2015 semester.

"The Fall 2015 cutoff is only because we have to produce and print the commencement program in March," said Wennergren in the follow-up clarification email.

The GPA cutoff for honors are:

Summa Cum Laude - 3.907

Magna Cum Laude - 3.825

Cum Laude - 3.736

Since Spring semester will not be applied at graduation, student GPAs may or may not be represented accurately at the ceremony. GPAs will be correct on documents following graduation.

"Honors will not show up on documents," said Wennergren in regards to students dropping their GPA during Spring semester.

Although it's rare for students to lose honors, it's possible a student who has lost honors standing could have an honors cord at graduation, Wennergren said.

"It's not like we can track down each person and take away their cord," said Sarah Lof, graduation coordinator at Westminster.

When informed about the Fall 2015 cutoff for graduation honors, some Westminster students expressed strong feelings.

"That's unfair," said Bibek Neupane, a senior double majoring in economics and theatre.

"Why exclude one semester?" Neupane asked. "Maybe I want to exclude the semester I did terribly rather than exclude my last semester."

The early cutoff not only impacts students wanting to raise their GPA for graduation like Neupane, it also impacts transfers who won't reach their 60 Westminster credits until Spring semester.

"Now that I know I'm not going to get that cord, it kinda sucks," said Louise Saafi, a transfer student who won't have 60 Westminster credits completed until Spring semester. "I would like to have that cord. At the same time, I know how much graduation means to me anyways without the cord."

Aside from the Fall semester cutoff, the biggest issue to some is that diplomas will not be handed out at graduation, which is different than other years at Westminster.

Since final GPAs won't be calculated in time for the ceremony, students will receive their diplomas after graduation.

"That's kind of frustrating," said Allisyn Thompson, arts administration major with an emphasis in theatre. "You work four years to get that piece of paper."

Saafi, a transfer student and communication major, described not getting a diploma at graduation as "problematic."

"I know some people who need their degree right when they graduate for job purposes," Saafi said.

When it comes down to it, Wennergren, the registrar, said she believes graduation is something to be proud of.

"I'm happy to be graduating in the first place," Saafi said.

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