

History of Graduation with Distinction

Long a part of the senior year experience in Trinity College of Arts and Sciences, the Graduation with Distinction program was given new life with a set of recommendations passed by the Arts and Sciences Council in 1996. The intent of these recommendations was to enhance Graduation with Distinction and to clarify its purpose of recognizing excellence in a specific area of study. The attention to high standards and exceptional work in the major contrasts with the other two forms of honors awarded by the College, Dean's List and Latin Honors, which are based solely on grade point average.

All academic units offering majors have a Graduation with Distinction program developed or revised since 1996 in accordance with the guidelines established by the then Committee on Honors under the leadership of Dr. Robert P. Erickson. Careful scrutiny of the individual departmental programs' standards has insured the high quality and focus of the distinction programs. A new pride and interest in Graduation with Distinction programs has resulted. Each year several units undertake a full revision of their programs, while others make minor changes such as developing a new honors course or changing the grade point average required. All such revisions, major or minor, are helpful and suggest that the programs are indeed functioning well and meeting expectations set in 1996.

In 2002, a further refinement of the Graduation with Distinction program was introduced in the interest of promoting interdisciplinarity at Duke. The Committee on Curriculum established procedures to allow double honors, that is, honors in two academic units for a single thesis.

The vitality of the Graduation with Distinction program is manifest also in the number of units graduating students with distinction, and the number of students who have earned distinction:

Year	# Units Graduating Students with Distinction	# Students Earning Distinction
2000-01	24	158
2001-02	28	195
2002-03	27	167
2003-04	23	170
2004-05	31	167
2005-06	30	214
2006-07	31	296
2007-08	30	291

In 2004-2005 about 12% of students in Trinity College graduated with Distinction. At that time, the College set as a goal for the next several years to double the number of students completing mentored research leading to the awarding of Graduation with Distinction. In 2006-2007 21 percent and in 2007-2008 22 percent of the graduating class earned Distinction in the major.