Academic Recognition: Class Rank to Laude System

Timeline

➔ Alumni survey (April - May 2019)
➔ Class of 2019 student focus groups (June 2019, 75 students)
➔ Parent, student, community roundtable event (May 2019)
➔ Parent, student, community roundtable event (July 2019)

➔ July 15:   Report to Board on Stakeholder Feedback
➔ July 22:   Report to Board on Whitnall Student Data
➔ August 5:   Proposal to Board for Laude System
➔ August 19:   Action by Board on Laude System

Class Rank: Background

- Whitnall has used a traditional class rank, based on weighted GPA, to publicly recognize students for their academic achievement.

- Whitnall recognizes a Valedictorian and Salutatorian as the highest ranked students in their graduating class.

- At Whitnall, class rank is weighted using a formula computed with AP/honors/post-secondary classes given a higher weight.

Class Rank - What is it?

- Class rank is a statistic that is derived by comparing students' GPAs to the hundredth of a point. *Ex: 3.38> 3.35*
- Class rank is usually referred to by percent or percentile. *Ex: "In the top 10%", "In the top 25%", "In the top 50%"*
- Rank is based on a weighted GPA

The weighted grading scale is not equally distributed weighting.

	Non-Weighted GPA Points	Weighted GPA Points	Difference
A	4.000	5.000	1.000
A-	3.670	4.588	0.918
B+	3.330	4.163	0.833
B	3.000	3.750	0.750
B-	2.670	3.338	0.668
C=	2.330	2.913	0.583
C	2.000	2.500	0.500
C-	1.670	1.670	0.000
D+	1.330	1.330	0.000
D	1.000	1.000	0.000
D-	0.670	0.670	0.000
F	0.000	0.000	0.000

Class Rank as a Statistic

- Class rank could be a very valid statistic IF every student took the same set of classes with the same set of teachers.
- The validity of using class rank to compare students among various school districts is nonexistent.
- Colleges re-weight students' GPAs to their own formulas.

Where is the Top?

- In a school our size it is very difficult to be in the top 20 of your class.
- In a high achieving class, this can mean high GPA cut-off for top 20.
- Relatively small differences in GPAs can result in relatively large differences in class rank.

Example: The 18th ranked student in the Class of 2018 had the same GPA as the 42nd ranked student in the Class of 2019.

WHY consider dropping Class Rank?

- The validity of class rank as a statistic is extremely questionable.
- The pressure for class rank may have negative effects on student behavior.
- Stress caused by class rank is not under a school's control.
- Class rank may even hurt students for college admissions. Without rank, admissions need to use other criteria.
- Class rank is NOT as important as class choice for most university admissions due to grade inflation.

Reduced Use of Class Rank

- Not reporting class rank is becoming more common:
- **Greenfield**   **Greendale**   **New Berlin**
- **Arrowhead**   **Homestead**   **Shorewood**
- **Whitefish Bay**   **Burlington**   **Elmbrook**
- Wilmot   Madison West   Fennimore
- Waunakee   Neenah   Kimberly
- Edgewood   Kiel   Elkhorn
- Middleton   Plymouth   Wis. Dells
- Amery   Rice Lake   East Troy
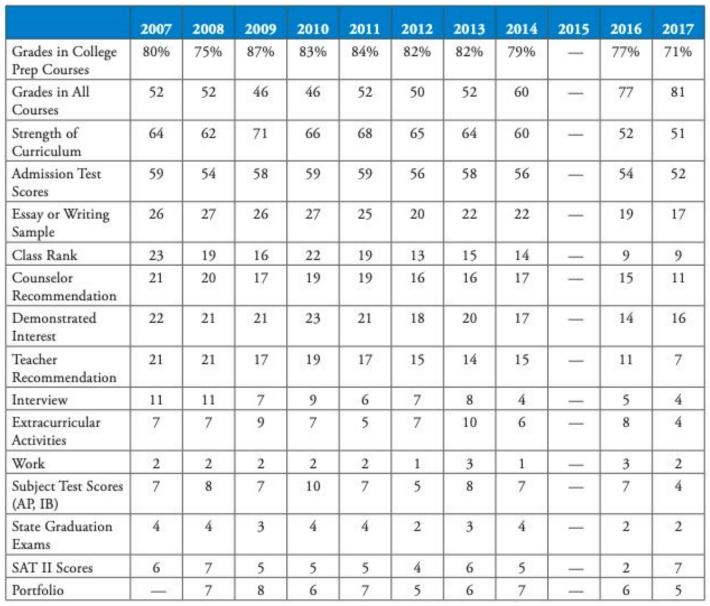- Richland Center   DeForest   Westosha

National Trend

- Reporting class rank is not actually "standard" practice across the nation.
- According to the *National Association for College Admission Counseling,* 55% of high schools do not report rank.

TABLE 7. PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACTORS IN ADMISSION DECISIONS: FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN, FALL 2017

Factor	N	Considerable Importance	Moderate Importance	Limited Importance	No Importance
Grades in All Courses	173	80.9	10.4	5.8	2.9
Grades in College Prep Courses	171	70.8	17.5	8.8	2.9
Admission Test Scores (SAT, ACT)	172	52.3	30.8	14.5	2.3
Strength of Curriculum	170	51.2	29.4	12.9	6.5
Essay or Writing Sample	168	16.7	36.9	20.8	25.6
Counselor Recommendation	167	10.8	46.1	28.7	14.4
Student's Demonstrated Interest	168	15.5	21.4	34.5	28.6
Teacher Recommendation	168	7.1	46.4	29.2	17.3
Class Rank	172	9.3	27.9	36.0	26.7
Extracurricular Activities	169	3.6	34.9	40.8	20.7
Subject Test Scores (AP, IB)	166	4.2	28.9	28.3	38.6
Portfolio	167	5.4	7.2	27.5	59.9
Interview	168	3.6	14.3	29.2	53.0
Work	169	1.8	17.8	41.4	39.1
SAT II Scores	166	6.6	3.0	19.9	70.5
State Graduation Exam Scores	168	1.8	8.3	17.9	72.0

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2017–18.

TABLE 10. PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING "CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE" TO FACTORS IN ADMISSION DECISIONS: FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN, FALL 2007 TO FALL 2017

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Grades in College Prep Courses	80%	75%	87%	83%	84%	82%	82%	79%	—	77%	71%
Grades in All Courses	52	52	46	46	52	50	52	60	—	77	81
Strength of Curriculum	64	62	71	66	68	65	64	60	—	52	51
Admission Test Scores	59	54	58	59	59	56	58	56	—	54	52
Essay or Writing Sample	26	27	26	27	25	20	22	22	—	19	17
Class Rank	23	19	16	22	19	13	15	14	—	9	9
Counselor Recommendation	21	20	17	19	19	16	16	17	—	15	11
Demonstrated Interest	22	21	21	23	21	18	20	17	—	14	16
Teacher Recommendation	21	21	17	19	17	15	14	15	—	11	7
Interview	11	11	7	9	6	7	8	4	—	5	4
Extracurricular Activities	7	7	9	7	5	7	10	6	—	8	4
Work	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	—	3	2
Subject Test Scores (AP, IB)	7	8	7	10	7	5	8	7	—	7	4
State Graduation Exams	4	4	3	4	4	2	3	4	—	2	2
SAT II Scores	6	7	5	5	5	4	6	5	—	2	7
Portfolio	—	7	8	6	7	5	6	7	—	6	5

—Data are not available.

Purpose of the Laude System

The purpose of the Laude System is to recognize students for the rigor of <u>their</u> academic program as well as their success in that program. It is a point based system that combines advanced level course points (based on advanced courses taken) and the cumulative grade point average to create a Laude Score. The Laude Score determines which laude rank a student receives at graduation.

Laude System

- Used for both academic achievement and rigor of coursework
- Points-based system based on advanced courses and GPA
- **Gives control to students** through honor point attainment rather than rankings
- Variations of laude systems
- Different levels of distinction
    - ❖ **Summa Cum Laude: Highest Honor**
    - ❖ **Magna Cum Laude: Great Honor**
    - ❖ **Cum Laude: Honor**

Academic Recognition

	Mode *	**Val/Sal**
Class of 2020	Class Rank	Yes
Class of 2021	Class Rank	Yes
Class of 2022	Laude	No
Class of 2023	Laude	No

Class rank information would be available should a student need for an application.

Laude Criteria and Score (in Handbook)

Laude Criteria

Courses earning laude semester credits are identified by high school administration and staff. A review process is in place for course additions or eliminations. Courses earning laude semester credits are those that are most rigorous, have potential to earn college credit, or are a capstone for a career pathway. Students transferring to Whitnall will earn laude points for passing Advanced Placement (AP) courses in a prior high school.

Laude courses are identified in the student course handbook, and a student will earn one laude credit per semester of successful completion.

Laude Score: A student's laude score will be determined by multiplying the following two factors:
1. The student's cumulative GPA at the completion of the first semester of the senior year.
2. The number of designated laude semester credits earned at the completion of the 2nd semester of the senior year.

**Students must have a minimum grade point of 3.500 to qualify.

There are three levels of designation: *summa cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *cum laude*. The ranges for this recognition are as follows:

Summa Cum Laude:	**Magna Cum Laude:**	**Cum Laude:**
○ 80 Laude Points ○ 3.5 - 4.0 GPA	○ 57-71.999 Laude Points ○ 3.5 - 4.0 GPA	○ 40-56.999 Laude Points ○ 3.5 - 4.0 GPA