Academic Honors & Awards

Dean’s List: At the end of each semester, in recognition of exceptional scholarship, the college compiles a list of those students whose work has been particularly worthy of commendation. Students will be cited on the Dean’s List if they complete a minimum of 14 units of graded work while achieving a grade point average of 3.6 for the semester. No incomplete or “N” grades may be outstanding as part of the semester record. All work must be completed and grades posted by the first day of the following semester in order to be considered for Dean’s List. For spring semester courses, all work must be completed by the beginning of Summer Session II (typically mid-June).

College Honors: Upon assessment by the College Office, the AB with College Honors will be awarded to any student who achieves collegewide academic excellence as measured by a cumulative grade point average of 3.6 or better throughout eight semesters and who does not receive Latin Honors.

Latin Honors: To be eligible for Latin Honors, the student must have maintained a 3.65 grade point average through the sixth semester and must be accepted for candidacy by the relevant department or program. Latin Honors candidates must enroll in such courses as their department or program may require, satisfactorily complete a significant project appropriate to the nature of the discipline, and pass such written and/or oral examinations as the department or program may set. To earn such honors, candidates must also have maintained the minimum 3.65 grade point average through the final semester.

Upon certification by the department that the Honors program has been satisfactorily completed, the student may be awarded the AB cum laude, magna cum laude, or summa cum laude according to the following proportions: The top 15 percent in overall grade point average of the full cohort of Latin Honors candidates who complete the necessary requirements of their major departments will graduate summa cum laude; the next 35 percent magna cum laude; the next 50 percent cum laude.

To be eligible for Latin Honors, transfer students must have earned a minimum of 48 letter-graded Washington University units prior to the final semester. Grades earned at other institutions do not figure in the calculation of minimum averages required for eligibility for Latin Honors.

Phi Beta Kappa: For more than 200 years, election to Phi Beta Kappa has been a distinctive recognition of intellectual accomplishment in the liberal arts and sciences. The Washington University chapter, Beta of Missouri, established in 1913, strives to enhance worthy intellectual endeavors and to recognize individual achievement. Candidates for Phi Beta Kappa should have demonstrated both superior scholarship and breadth and depth of interest in the liberal arts. Study of a foreign language and of mathematics, while not required, strongly enhances candidacy. Extensive study in pre-professional fields detracts from candidacy.

Students do not apply for Phi Beta Kappa; rather, each year the Washington University chapter elects students into membership from the College of Arts & Sciences. The chapter also gives the annual Burton M. Wheeler Book Award for distinguished achievement in the first year. Selection committees are composed of Washington University faculty who are members of Phi Beta Kappa.

Departmental Prizes and Awards

Several departments recognize the superior achievement of graduating seniors with election to the honor societies of their major fields. These honor societies include Sigma Gamma Epsilon for earth and planetary sciences students, Omicron Delta Epsilon for economics students, Delta Phi Alpha for German students, Phi Alpha Theta for history students, Sigma Iota Rho for international and area studies students, Pi Mu Epsilon for mathematics students, Mu Phi Epsilon for music students, Pi Sigma Alpha for political science students, and Psi Chi for psychological & brain sciences students.

Departments may recognize work a student has accomplished within the major by awarding the major with highest distinction, high distinction, or distinction.

In a number of academic fields, special recognition is given to students whose accomplishments have been exceptionally noteworthy. The majority of such awards carry modest monetary prizes and include the following, listed alphabetically by department:

• Best essay on any subject related to African-American culture and life in the United States (African and African-American Studies)
• Henry Hampton Prize for Best Civil Rights Essay
• James Baldwin Essay Prize for Best Essay on African-American Culture and Life in the U.S.
• Julius Nyerere Essay Prize for Best Essay on African Culture and Life
• Louis Lomax Journalism Prize in African and African-American Studies
• Ralph Bunche Prize for Best Political Science Essay about Africans or African Americans
• Sylvia Wynter Essay Prize for Best Essay on African Culture and Life Outside of the U.S.
• Lynne Cooper Harvey Undergraduate Writing Prize in American Culture Studies
• John W. Bennett Prize to the Outstanding Graduating Senior in Anthropology
• Mark S. Weil Prize for Distinction in Art History and Museum Practice
• Murphy Family Prize for Outstanding Honors Thesis in Art History and Archaeology
• Yale Book Prize for Distinction in Art History and Archaeology
• Harrison D. Stalker Prize in Biology
• Marian Smith Spector Prize for Outstanding Graduate in Biology
• John C. Snowden Prize for Outstanding Senior in Chemistry
• The Hemholtz Award in Chemistry
• The Lipkin Award in Chemistry
• The Wahl Award in Chemistry
• The Weismann Award in Chemistry
• Stanley Spector Memorial Award for Outstanding Paper in East Asian Languages and Cultures
• Ansehl Prize for Excellence in Chinese
• Yukiko Takahashi Prize for Excellence in Japanese
• Carl Conrad Prize for Excellence in Classical Studies
• Eugene Tavenner Prize for Excellence in the Study of Classics
• Edward Weltin Award for Excellence in the Study of Ancient History
• Liselotte Dieckmann Prize for Excellence in Comparative Literature
• William H. Matheson Prize for Excellence in Comparative Literature
• A.E. Hotchner Playwriting Competition Award
• Annelise Mertz Memorial Award for Outstanding Achievement in Modern Dance
• Ian D.W. Cramer Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Dance
• John J. Jutkowitz Memorial Prize for Outstanding Contributions in Performing Arts
• Margaret Ewing Memorial Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Acting
• Stephen H. Duncan Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Design and Technical Theatre
• Courtney Werner Memorial Prize for Outstanding Academic Achievement in Earth and Planetary Sciences
• Ernest L. Ohle Jr. Award for Outstanding Potential in Earth and Planetary Sciences
• Margaret E. Bewig Memorial Field Camp Award for Academic Merit in Earth and Planetary Sciences
• Adam Smith Prize for Excellence in Economics
• Hyman P. Minsky Prize for Excellence in Economics
• Olin Prize for Excellence in Economics
• Howard Nemerov Award Prize in Poetry
• James Merrill Prize for Poetry
• Grossman-Alexander Prize for Outstanding Graduate in American Politics
• Robert H. Salisbury Prize for Initiative, Leadership, and Service in Political Science
• Todd Lewis Friedman Memorial Prize for Outstanding Work in Comparative or International Politics
• William Benton Parshall Prize for Outstanding Paper on Women in Politics
• Hyman Meltzer Memorial Award for Undergraduate Research in Psychology
• John A. Stern Award for Undergraduate Research in Psychology
• Louis G. Zelson Prize for Study Abroad in Spain
• Sherman Eoff Prize for Excellence in Spanish
• Helen Power Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Award for Scholarship and Service