

Dear Upper School Parents and Students,

We are emailing to share important news regarding student transcripts at Woodward Academy, resulting from a comprehensive, two-year examination of our grading practices. Effective this school year, we will change the way we calculate grade point averages (GPAs) for Upper School students. Quality points assigned for each grade earned will be increased to align more closely with our peer schools and national best practices.

“Quality points” are the extra points added to a grade based on the rigor of a course’s academic level. The rationale for our revision is to best position our students for success in an ever-changing college landscape. While many colleges strip quality points or recalculate GPAs, others will allow up to a full point for Advanced Placement classes. Following is an outline of the increases in each of our academic levels. Please keep in mind that grades below a C do not earn additional quality points.

- Advanced Placement (AP) will change from .7 to 1 for grades A, B, and C.
- Honors Prep (HP) will change from .5 to .8 for grades of A, B, and C.
- Enriched Prep (EP) will change from .1 to .4 for grades of A, B, and C.
- College Prep (CP) will change from .0 to .3 for grades of A, B, and C.

Please note that this change only will affect current and future students; transcripts for students who graduated in 2016 or earlier will not change. Our revised GPAs will be retroactive for upperclassmen, so that all current students will enjoy a boost in their GPA for prior coursework in the Woodward Academy Upper School. In the coming weeks, our Academic Dean’s office will be working with the IT department to adjust the grades of all our Upper School students accordingly. The Academic Dean’s office also has collaborated with our College Counseling office to ensure that records are accurate for our seniors.

As you may imagine, this change has numerous implications beyond the college admissions process. Some of these are internal to Woodward, such as graduating with honors and Eagle Roll status, while others are external, such as qualification for HOPE scholarships and NCAA eligibility. We have developed a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) in anticipation of your questions and concerns. (The FAQ, which you can find on the next page, includes new benchmarks for many of these academic honors.) In addition, students or parents may reach out to the Academic Dean, school counselor, or college counselor for more information.

At Woodward, our commitment to academic excellence includes an ongoing review of our practices and standards. By adjusting the way we calculate our GPAs, we will ensure that our students and our rigorous curriculum are well represented on our transcripts.

Best regards,

Chris M. Freer, Ph.D.
Vice President for Student Life
Upper School Principal

Marcia Prewitt Spiller
Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Revised GPA Calculations

Effective September 1, 2016

How will the revised GPA quality points affect in-house calculations?

The changes are more for external purposes than internal. Thus, certain thresholds have been adjusted as follows.

- **Eagle Roll consideration** will still be based on the COMPREHENSIVE GPA; however, the thresholds to receive Silver and Gold Eagle have adjusted accordingly to align with our revised GPA calculations. Therefore, the same letter grades that would have earned CP, EP, HP, and AP students these recognitions in the past will still earn them the same recognition in the 2016 school year for a full-course load.
 - Silver Eagle was previously a 3.2 comprehensive average of semester 1 with semester 2; it will now be 3.5.
 - Gold Eagle was previously a 3.8 comprehensive average of semester 1 with semester 2; it will now be 4.0.

- Consideration to apply for **National Honor Society** will continue to be based on the CORE GPA of grades from 5 semesters (grade 11) or 7 semesters (grade 12); however, the threshold to receive an application will be raised from 3.5 to 3.8. Again, the same letter grades that would have earned CP, EP, HP, and AP students an NHS invitation in the past will earn them an invitation in the 2016-2017 school year.

- **Graduation with honors** will continue to be based on the CORE GPA from 9th, 10th, and 11th grades plus semester 1 of 12th grade; the number of AP and HP courses taken in the two semesters of the junior year and the first semester of the senior year will not change. However, the thresholds to receive the three levels of graduation honors have changed. The same letter grades that would have earned those students with the required HP and AP semesters these recognitions in the past will earn them recognition in the 2016-2017 school year.
 - Cum Laude was 3.2; it will now be 3.5.
 - Magna Cum Laude was 3.5; it will now be 3.8.
 - Summa Cum Laude was 3.8; it will now be 4.1.

- Pages 1-22 of the 2016-2017 Curriculum and Scheduling Guide will be revised to reflect the change in weights and will be posted at the Academic Dean's web page: <https://www.woodward.edu/parents/upper-school/academic-deans-office>.

Will our other Woodward schools also be using the revised GPA calculations?

Only the Upper School is revising GPA calculations this year. Our other four schools will continue to use the GPA calculations and Eagle Roll thresholds that they used in the past. We are evaluating a potential roll-out to the other schools in the future and will update you when we have more information.

Will the official transcript designation of GPAs be changed? When will I see the change?

On both the official and unofficial transcript, the Comprehensive and Core GPAs will continue to appear. Changing the weight on all the courses and adding all summer school work to the transcripts are not quick tasks. By mid-September, the GPAs will be updated, and parents will receive an unofficial copy of the revised transcript, just as they did in June. Seniors who are self-reporting their GPAs on college applications will have the revised number on or soon after September 1. College Counseling will upload the new GPAs by September 1 to Naviance.

How will the additional points change the HOPE GPA, as calculated by the Georgia Student Finance Commission?

The additional points will not change the HOPE GPA. In the past a student at Woodward who took no computer classes and all CP courses could count on the HOPE GPA being very close to the WA CORE GPA. That is no longer the case. Woodward's GPAs for all students will be higher than the HOPE calculated GPA. See https://apps.gsfc.org/main/publishing/pdf/2007/80_gpa.pdf for the current version of how HOPE calculates GPAs. It is not permitted for anyone in Woodward's academic dean office or college counseling office to calculate a HOPE GPA or a potential HOPE GPA. Only the GSFC calculates HOPE GPAs. Only students with Social Security numbers in Woodward's system will have their transcripts uploaded to HOPE for calculation. Students must have an account with the HOPE system to monitor their progress with HOPE. The Academic Dean's office does post the GPAs HOPE reports to them (in late February or early March and over the summer).

How will the additional points change the NCAA's GPA calculation of the 16 required courses?

Currently NCAA does count all high schools' HP and AP weights for the 16 courses included in each athlete's GPA. NCAA does not accept a change beginning for the class of 2017 until September 2016. We will inform them by September 1 of the changing in our weighting for CP, EP, HP, and AP courses. Most likely NCAA will accept the new HP and AP weighting but will still not accept weighting for CP and EP coursework. It is doubtful they will require a new transcript to be uploaded to NCAA (no coursework has been added since the summer upload, and NCAA's GPA calculation is limited to 16 courses; they do not use our cumulative GPAs as posted on the transcripts). However, if they ask us to do so, the Academic Dean's office will send the revised transcripts as soon as possible.

Will the improved GPA reports positively affect the chances of our students for college admissions?

We cannot know how much the additional weighting will help our students; it will depend on how a specific college handles the high school's GPA. We must remember that colleges often recalculate high school GPAs, using their own methods and weightings or removing all weighting. Colleges are still going to look at a given GPA in relation to other GPAs from the same school, even though Woodward does not rank. The GPA is just a part of the academic review process in college admissions. Course selection, progress, teacher recommendations, essays, standardized testing, cocurricular achievement, and involvement all play varying roles of importance.

Will the GPAs for those who graduated in 2016 or before be changed?

No. In keeping with best practices, only those students currently a part of Woodward's class of 2017 and future classes will have GPAs calculated that reflect the increased or added weighting system.

Will courses taken outside of Woodward be a part of the GPA calculations?

For the classes of 2018 and forward, only courses taken at Woodward are part of the GPA calculations shown on the transcript or used for Eagle awards, NHS invitations, and honors at graduation.

I have read this document and still have questions. Whom should I contact?

Email the US Academic Dean, Peggy McNash (peggy.mcnash@woodward.edu)