



November 14, 2019

Dear Walnut Hills School Community,

The Walnut Hills Local School Decision Making Committee made the decision to eliminate class rank beginning with the class of 2021. The Walnut Hills LSDMC recognizes the importance of rigorous, challenging coursework, a diversified learning experience, and the personal and emotional growth of every student. The elimination of class rank does not affect our commitment to these values. Academic excellence will continue to be recognized and celebrated. Key considerations in coming to this decision include:

- The differences in grade-point averages among our highest achieving students are statistically insignificant, often less than one-hundredth of a point. Many students with strong grade point averages at Walnut Hills are not ranked in the top 20% of the class. Our students, who are among the best in the nation, are sometimes overlooked for admission to colleges or receipt of scholarships solely due to class rank. We desire for colleges and scholarships to view the whole student, not just a ranking among an above average peer group.
- Over 60% of high schools across the country no longer rank their students. This is not adversely affecting entry into college. In fact, the opposite is happening. When colleges do not have class rank, they more holistically evaluate a student for admission and rely more on the rigor of the high school curriculum, involvement in the school community, writing samples, and letters of recommendation. Data from colleges shows the importance of class rank has drastically dropped over the past decade.
- Competition and stress about class rank is adversely affecting the mental well-being of our students. Students are not enrolling in courses they are interested in; rather, they are enrolling in courses that will give them the most credit toward class rank. Some students are giving up their summers to take classes, and are taking heavy course loads solely to move them higher in the class rank structure.

Elimination of class rank means that there will no longer be identification of a Valedictorian or Salutatorian. Consequently, the LSDMC spent time determining how a speaker at graduation will be chosen. Beginning with the Class of 2021, the graduation speaker will be called Distinguished Scholar and there will be 2 main areas of emphasis for selection of this role. In keeping with Walnut Hills High School's tradition of excellence in academics, the Distinguished Scholar will be chosen from the top 20% of the students who are graduating Cum Laude. Cum Laude is a way to honor high scholastic achievement and includes no more than 20% of the graduating class. For more information about Cum Laude, please visit www.cumlaudesociety.org. In addition to high academic achievement, a student who has been actively involved in and positively contributing to the WHHS community will be sought.

Students who meet the following criteria will be invited to apply for Distinguished Scholar:

- In the top 20% of the students who are graduating Cum Laude
- Have attended Walnut Hills High School for at least 5 consecutive years

Students must submit a completed application by the stated deadline. **Late applications will not be accepted.** The application will include the student's resume, an essay written by the student, and a letter of recommendation written by a coach, community member, or club advisor. Applications will be reviewed by a committee selected by the Principal and will include:

- Principal
- 2 Teachers
- Cum Laude committee member
- 1 WHHS Alumnus, at least 5 year post-graduation

No committee members will be the parent of a current Walnut Hills High School student. Committee members will be "blind reviewers" who will only see applications with names redacted.

Please understand that the LSDMC considered these decisions seriously and over a great length of time. We gathered data, looked at the research, and interviewed other high achieving high schools who have eliminated class rank. We are confident that this decision is in the best interest of the students at Walnut Hills High School.

Sincerely,



John Chambers
Principal, Walnut Hills High School



Laura Stith Deck
LSDMC Chair, Walnut Hills High School

References regarding class rank:

<https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2019/03/01/high-school-ranking-would-you-rather-top-of-the-class-or-suma-cum-laude/3014665002/>

<https://www.collegedata.com/en/prepare-and-apply/strengthen-your-chances/how-colleges-admit-students/what-matters-most-to-colleges/>

https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018_soc/soca18.pdf

<https://www.ivycoach.com/the-ivy-coach-blog/college-admissions/decline-of-class-rank/>

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED538327.pdf>