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# Michael A. Davis Jr.

January 31, 2006

Mark R. Hamilton  
UA President

Dear General Hamilton:

I am writing in regards to my wife's recent graduation from UAF. I hope this letter does not come off as whiny or simply complaining, having spent 14 years in the Marine Corps I have no appreciation for either.

First let me recognize my personal bias in this matter. I am writing this without my wife's blessings or knowledge. I am extremely proud of her accomplishments, and simply wish to voice my disappointment in the handling, by UAF, of one particular issue. That issue is Bethe's graduation with honors. Bethe was granted magna cum laude honors, but I believe she deserves summa cum laude. Please allow me to explain.

I understand that UA has established criteria for graduation with honors, and while strictly adhering to those criteria, Bethe does in fact qualify for magna cum laude, and not summa cum laude. Bethe graduated not only with her Bachelor of Business Administration focus in Accounting, but also with the full 150 credit hours needed to sit her CPA examinations. She is sitting the third examination as I write this letter, and has received the results of her first examination. She achieved 90% on her first sitting of her first exam, an exam that has a failure rate of almost 70% of first time takers. Bethe's GPA for all 150 hours UAF recognized was 4.0. In fact for every college level course Bethe has taken except one, she received an A. And that one course is the reason Bethe was not awarded summa cum laude honors, per the current criteria.

So, why do I feel Bethe deserves summa cum laude? The course the precluded Bethe from achieving this honor was a one credit, non-academic class. It was a career aptitude course offered by a community college that Bethe attended while I was stationed in Southern California. Bethe openly disagreed with the results of the aptitude tests, she did not feel she would find the career fields suggested by the tests to be a good fit for her. The course instructor took exception to Bethe's disagreement and gave her a B for the course. There was no homework, no assignments of any type, not even grades for the "tests" administered.

The very fact that Bethe questioned the results of the tests demonstrates the kind of person she is. Always looking for a better understanding of the material she is studying, it didn't matter whether she felt the material was critical to her chosen career path, she truly wanted to grow as a person with every opportunity.

As a freshman when choosing her science requirements, instead of taking the easier paths available, she chose to take the biology depth program. An unusual choice for a business major, considering the heavy work load. But she made such an impression on her instructor, Kent E. Schwaegerle (Associate Professor of Botany and Department Head), that he offered her a job on his research team.



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Bethe was consistently recognized by her instructors for her excellent work to include:

- Student of the Year, Concepts of Accounting, 2003
- Student of the Year, Financial and Governmental Accounting, 2004
- Student of the Year, Outstanding Accounting Student, 2005

And by her fellow students who awarded her the Great Alaskan Accounting People (GAAP) Leadership Award in both 2004 and 2005. Truth be told, her fellow students voted to give her more than one award each of these years, but as president she ruled that no one person should receive more than one award, allowing more students the opportunity to receive awards. A fine example of her selflessness and desire to improve the program.

Under her leadership GAAP went from a financially insolvent, unorganized, student organization with very little participation, to a force within the UAF community. In 2005 not only did GAAP sweep the student organization awards, but they also held the most successful raffle in UAF history. Bethe also served as a student representative for the UAF client services committee during her tenure as GAAP president.

As one would expect with a 4.0 GPA, Bethe maintained her placement on the following:

- Golden Key National Honor Society
- Chancellor's List
- National Dean's List
- Dean's List

Finally during the course of all her work at UAF, Bethe continued to fulfill her responsibilities as a wife, mother of two, and volunteer in the community.

I do not dispute that Bethe did not strictly meet the UAF criteria for summa cum laude. But I ask you to consider the information I have provided, and ask yourself if Bethe is not deserving of "Highest Honors".

At the awards breakfast spring 2005 you shook Bethe's hand and congratulated her on her award as the Outstanding Accounting Student for 2005, and praised her for her 4.0 GPA. She did not mention to you that she had a 4.0 GPA, you remembered it out of the 180 students given an award that morning. Bethe and I were both very impressed by that. And apparently you were impressed enough by what they said about Bethe that morning to remember that detail. As you were impressed that one morning, I think you would find that Bethe similarly impressed her instructors every day for 5 years.

One more thing and I will sign off, the class that kept Bethe from graduating summa cum laude... UAF didn't even recognize it. She received no transfer credit, it does not count towards graduation or her degree. It hardly seems fair does it? Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Davis Jr.  
Proud, and yes, biased husband