Registrar handles graduation logistics

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When Luke Gunter became USC's registrar back in 1975, he knew his work would be cut out for him when it came to organizing commencement exercises.

Traditionally the Office of the Registrar handles the logistics of graduation, including reviewing applications of those students who plan to graduate, ordering diplomas and honorary degrees, along with preparing seating arrangements for students, families and guests.

"Graduation marks the end of a student's hard labor," Gunter said, "Our office wants to ensure each student that this day will be a memorable one for them and their families."

Gunter explained the procedure a student must follow in order to be considered for a degree:

■ The prospective graduate files an application with the registrar's office,

■ The application is reviewed by the computers at the registrar's office to see if the student is eligible by the university to receive a degree,

■ The application is then sent to the student's respective college and reviewed by his or her adviser and dean,

■ The college reviews the student's record to see if all college standards are met and all classes required have been taken.

■ The dean of the student's college then approves the application if all of the criteria have been met.

"This system is very effective. This idea of checks and balances enables us to get through the whole process with minimal error," Gunter said.

Once this primary process is complete, a letter from Gunter's office is immediately sent to students to notify them whether they have been approved for graduation. Degrees are then ordered for those students who have been approved.

Gunter's computers audit each record again to make sure they are eligible, and students who may graduate with honors (summa cum laude, magna cum laude, etc.) are recognized as well.
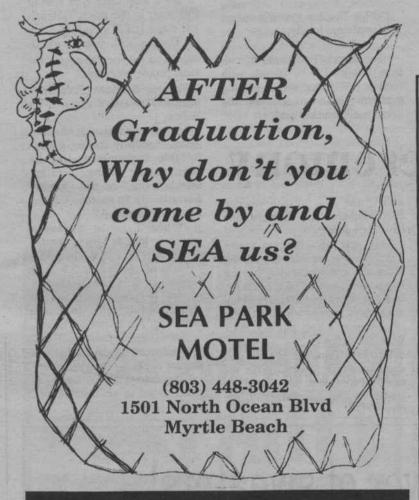
"We have to continue to audit and make constant changes because some students may be borderline honors students," Gunter said.

Gunter elaborated by offering an example of one ficticious student. If a student has a GPR of 3.499 and needs just .001 point to receive cum laude honors, the computer has to wait until the end of the term, right before graduation, before it can put "cum laude" on his degree.

"We make changes up until the last days before graduation. It is a very tedious process," Gunter said.

Along with auditing and changing students' graduation files,