

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**PROPOSED POLICIES ON THE RECOGNITION OF UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC
CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS ON OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY TRANSCRIPTS¹**

On behalf of the Educational Policy Committee, Professor Desmond Lawler (professor, civil, architectural, and environmental engineering and committee chair) submitted the following proposed policies on the recognition of undergraduate academic certificate programs on official University transcripts. The secretary has classified this proposal as *general* legislation, which will be presented to the Faculty Council at its meeting on March 24, 2008.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The Faculty Council and General Faculty

Distributed through the Faculty Council web site (www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/) on March 5, 2008. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, WMB 2.102, F9500.

¹ Proposal was amended by the Faculty Council at its meeting on April 14, 2008. A rationale for the amendment appears at the end of the motion.

**PROPOSED POLICIES ON THE RECOGNITION OF UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC
CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS ON OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY TRANSCRIPTS**

Background

In the past 15 years, several undergraduate certificate programs have been developed across campus to meet the needs of our undergraduate students. Perhaps the three most established certificate programs are the Business Foundations Program offered in the McCombs School of Business, the Bridging Disciplines Programs (formerly in Connexus, but now in the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies), and the Texas Interdisciplinary Plan. New programs are in development, such as Certificate in Ethics and Western Civilization in the College of Liberal Arts. Additional programs at the undergraduate level already exist and still others are under consideration.

Currently, the University has no common policies regarding these certificate programs. Some are listed in the catalog while others are not. Some have gone through an approval process similar to the development of new majors, but it is unclear whether this process is required or if it is appropriate. However, none are recognized on the Official University Transcript.

This legislation is designed to respond to both student and faculty requests that earned certificates be indicated on the official transcript by spelling out policies for recognition of certificate programs on a student's transcript. Throughout this document the term "transcript-recognized undergraduate academic certificate program" is used to identify those programs that would be recognized on the Official University Transcript, if this motion is approved.

Motion

Undergraduate academic certificates earned at The University of Texas at Austin will be indicated on the official University transcript only if the certificate program meets all of the conditions specified in A, B, and C below.

A. Minimum Criteria for Certificate Recognition on the Transcript

1. The transcript-recognized undergraduate academic certificate program must be completed in conjunction with or within one year of completion of an undergraduate degree at the University of Texas at Austin; students pursuing an integrated undergraduate/graduate program must complete the requirements for the certificate within one year after completing the undergraduate requirements of their program. A maximum of nine credit hours in the certificate program may be taken after completion of the undergraduate degree.
2. Transcript-recognized undergraduate academic certificate programs must require a minimum of 18 hours of certificate course work but not more than 24 hours.
3. At least half of the required course work in the certificate program must be completed in residence at The University of Texas at Austin.
4. A student may not earn a certificate in the same field of study as his or her major, and at least one course required in the certificate program must be outside the requirements of the major. However, courses in the certificate program outside the major may fulfill other degree requirements such as general education requirements or required elective hours.
5. Students apply for transcript recognized undergraduate academic certificates at the time they complete their undergraduate degree or the certificate program, whichever comes later. Transcript recognition is awarded at that time.

B. Approval Process For Transcript-Recognized Undergraduate Academic Certificate Programs

The requirements of transcript-recognized undergraduate academic certificate programs shall be listed in the undergraduate catalog, with proposals reviewed and approved by the Committee on Undergraduate Degree Program Review (CUDPR) and subsequently sent to the Faculty Council as minor legislation for approval. Proposals for these certificate programs are required to obtain prior approval from the sponsoring College(s) or School(s).

Program proposals must include a statement of objective and need (expected demand), academic course and other requirements, and the composition of the certificate program faculty committee, including the committee chair. The committee must have a minimum of five members, and at least 2/3 of the committee must be tenured or tenure-track faculty.

Once approved, programs are required to submit a report to CUDPR and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies every two years. The report must list the current chair and all committee members and include the number of students completing the certificate program in the prior two years. If the committee plans any changes in the requirements of the certificate program, these changes should be explained; changes require the same approvals as an original application, that is, approval by the College(s) or School(s), CUDPR, and the Faculty Council.

C. The Certification Process for Students Completing the Requirements

Certification of completion of the requirements is done by the program's faculty committee chair (or designee). An application for the certification of completion is initiated by the student and submitted to the chair of the faculty oversight committee at the time they complete their undergraduate degree or the certificate program, whichever comes later. Transcript recognition is awarded at that time.

Application for certification must be made directly to the certificate program and is not a substitute for the application for graduation required by a student's degree-granting school or college. After approval of the student's application, the Registrar's Office will be notified so that the certificate can be shown on the official transcript.

Rationale

Students in the existing certificate programs (as well as faculty involved in these programs) have long requested recognition of their work in these undergraduate certificate programs on the Official Transcript. Most of these programs give some recognition by a letter or certificate from the offering Department, College, or School, but there is no common practice. Given the demand for formal recognition, the potential growth in such programs, and the educational value of these programs, the Educational Policy Committee, at the request of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Senate of College Councils, approves the concept of recognizing certificates of academic significance on the official transcript and has developed these policies and processes regarding the official recognition of undergraduate academic certificate programs. We recognize that other, less extensive, undergraduate certificate programs exist now or might be created in the future; such programs should continue to operate but would not merit recognition on the Official University Transcript.

Approved by the Educational Policy Committee on March 4, 2008 and submitted to the Faculty Council for consideration and approval.

Desmond F. Lawler
Chair, Educational Policy Committee
Department of Civil, Architectural and Environmental Engineering

Rationale for Amendment

Submitted by Desiderio Kovar, associate professor, mechanical engineering.

We believe that the original wording of the proposed legislation defines the scope of these programs too narrowly and does not provide the flexibility that is needed to develop new certificate programs that would benefit students. A number of students—especially those enrolled in academic programs having few required elective hours—find it difficult to complete their undergraduate degree and certificate program requirements at the same time. The original motion would either 1) encourage these students to delay graduation in order to complete their certificate program, resulting in an increase in the time to graduate or 2) discourage these students from completing these supplemental programs, which are designed to enhance their academic experience and training. Neither of these outcomes is in the best interests of students or the University.

The proposed amendment will allow students to first complete their undergraduate degree or program requirements and then complete, within one year, their transcript-recognized undergraduate academic certificate program to be recognized on their Official University Transcript. Some students may choose to take these courses via Extension or through long distance learning classes. Note that we are NOT asking for any retroactive changes to university documents; we are simply asking that, at the time of completion of the requirements for a certificate, this information will be added to a student's official transcript.

Amendment approved by the Faculty Council at its meeting on April 14, 2008.