

Submitted by: Nancy S. Barrett, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATUTE ON GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATES

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors authorize the conferral of undergraduate certificates and adopt the proposed Statute on Guidelines for Undergraduate Certificate Programs, effective winter term 2009.

Background

Undergraduate Certificates will provide a mechanism for undergraduate students to receive specific knowledge and skills that will enhance their undergraduate experience. The concept is to provide students with a rigorous program of coursework that will lead to an area of concentration that builds on their undergraduate degree.

Rationale

In today's competitive professional marketplace, students often are seeking ways in which they can differentiate their educational background from those of others. In addition, many students (both current and potential) recognize the value of a targeted, specialized course of study to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to advance in their careers. Graduate education has traditionally provided one avenue for students to achieve this goal. However, there are opportunities and demand for specialization at the undergraduate level as well. This is especially attractive for students who do not want to make the commitment to graduate education, but who may be enticed to pursue an advanced degree once they have some exposure to a specialization area.

Undergraduate Certificates will also allow the units of the University to market their programs to a broader audience and demonstrate how their programs provide unique opportunities to prospective students. Students who have already earned an undergraduate degree in a related area will be able to apply to an Undergraduate Certificate Program to add to or refresh their education. These students would not be eligible to return to the University to earn a minor.

Related Programs at Wayne State University

In contrast to undergraduate minors, certificates provide more than an introduction to an area of study – students will generally be expected to have satisfied various prerequisites to the certificate courses through their previous undergraduate study. Also, Undergraduate Certificate Programs will have set admissions standards (not currently included in minor programs). Unlike Post-Baccalaureate Certificates, students will not be

required to have already completed a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree in order to participate in an Undergraduate Certificate Program. Post-Baccalaureate Certificates are also generally designed to provide a new field of training without requiring a full second degree to be completed. Thus, they do not necessarily build on the previous undergraduate background.

Related Programs at Other Universities

In Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, Michigan Technological University, Lawrence Technological University, and Northern Michigan University offer Undergraduate Certificates.

Approvals

The proposed Statute on Guidelines for Undergraduate Certificates was approved by the Council of Deans and the Academic Senate Policy Committee.

PROPOSED STATUTE ON GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATES

An Undergraduate Certificate Program is for students who are currently enrolled in undergraduate coursework or who have previously earned an undergraduate degree and who would like to add a certification to their current or past degree program. The Certificate Program may be within a single discipline or multidisciplinary, and is designed to provide students with specialized knowledge that is less extensive than an undergraduate major. These programs may be directed at three groups of individuals: 1) WSU undergraduate students pursuing a major in a related field; 2) WSU undergraduate students pursuing a major in another department; and 3) students who have previously earned a baccalaureate level degree at Wayne State or another institution and want a further concentration in related field.

Specific guidelines for an Undergraduate Certificate Program are:

- Program proposals shall include description, curriculum, admission requirements, rationale, resource requirements, budget, program standards, and evaluation plans for the proposed program.
- The program shall be open to Wayne State University students who have completed at least 60 credit hours and have a grade point average of 2.0 or above. The program shall also be open to students who have previously earned a baccalaureate level degree at Wayne State or another institution. Individual Undergraduate Certificate Programs may set higher admissions standards or other requirements for eligibility.

- The program shall consist of at least 15 semester credits of advanced courses at the undergraduate level (3000- to 6000-level). All credits must be earned at Wayne State. No transfer credits can be applied. Students who have completed their bachelor's degree may apply up to 9 credits to the Undergraduate Certificate requirements at the discretion of the department.
- The curriculum should focus on content and skills that are at an advanced undergraduate level. Where appropriate, the courses and/or curriculum should include projects and reports of an integrative, design, or research nature.
- A minimum grade point average of 2.0 must be achieved for courses in the particular certificate program to obtain an Undergraduate Certificate. Students must have completed identified prerequisites for each course in order to register for that course.

The Certificate Program will be comprised only of undergraduate-level courses. Up to 12 of the credit hours of coursework taken toward a student's first Undergraduate Certificate may also be used to satisfy undergraduate degree requirements. Additional Undergraduate Certificates for a particular student will require all certificate credits to be in addition to the undergraduate degree requirements. Credits applied to an Undergraduate Certificate cannot be applied toward a subsequent Wayne State University graduate degree.

- Undergraduate Certificates will be awarded upon completion of the related bachelor's program. Or, if the student already has been awarded the bachelor's degree, the certificate will be awarded upon completion of the certificate program.
- The program should utilize existing courses, facilities, and resources to the extent possible.
- The usual University approval procedures shall be followed in establishing such programs.