

FINAL REPORT
OF THE
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON CERTIFICATES (ACERT)

Presented at the
676th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
September 18, 2008

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Maurianne Adams, Co-Chair

Sonia Alvarez

Jane Baran

Carol Barr

John Cunningham

Dan Gerber

Bryan C. Harvey, Co-Chair

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Arthur Kinney

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Chris Roberts

Norman Sims

Patricia Stowell

Cynthia Suopis

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ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

On February 14, 2008, the Ad Hoc Committee on Certificates (ACERT) (Sen. Doc. No. 08-018A) was established by vote of the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate has “certificate” proposals pending in several Councils which do not conform to the University’s current understanding of, and regulations regarding “certificates.” The purpose of this Ad Hoc Committee was to deliberate the purpose and desirability of current and proposed undergraduate and graduate certificate programs and to determine whether to recommend changes in the University’s current policies and procedures with respect to certificates at both the graduate level and the undergraduate level.

The Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Certificates (Sen. Doc. No. 09-001) was presented at the Faculty Senate Meeting of September 18, 2008. The Supplemental Guidelines for Undergraduate Certificates were approved by the Academic Matters Council (November 19, 2008) and by the Faculty Senate (December 11, 2008). The Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Certificates (Sen. Doc. No. 09-001) was reviewed and approved by the Academic Matters Council on February 4, 2009.

GRADUATE COUNCIL

The Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee (ASCC) of the Graduate Council of the Faculty Senate met and carefully reviewed the Report of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Certificates (ACERT). The ASCC recommended this report for approval. The ASCC also took the opportunity provided for in the ACERT Report to develop an additional set of guidelines for Graduate Certificates.

The ACERT report addresses and resolves the issues concerning curriculum overlap of certificate and degree programs by allowing for such overlap. It also provides additional and needed flexibility in admission requirements for certificates by allowing non-matriculated individuals to apply for admission. The five-year sunset provision for certificates is also an important provision of this policy. Lastly, the provision allowing the Graduate Council to develop a set of additional specific guidelines to accompany and implement the policy provisions of the ACERT report is a key component of this report.

On Wednesday, December 10, 2008, the Graduate Council met and approved the ACERT Report. At that time, the Graduate Council also approved an additional set of guidelines for Graduate Certificates developed by the ASCC.

**Final Report to the Faculty Senate
Ad Hoc Committee on Certificates (ACERT)**

(1) Background, rationale, and Faculty Senate charge to ACERT:

The Ad Hoc Committee on Certificates (ACERT) was established by vote of the Faculty Senate on February 14, 2008 (Sen. Doc. No. 08-018A) with the following rationale and purpose:

Rationale:

The Faculty Senate has “certificate” proposals pending in several Councils which do not conform to the University’s current understanding of, and regulations regarding “certificates.” The purpose of this Ad Hoc Committee is to deliberate the purpose and desirability of current and proposed undergraduate and graduate certificate programs and to determine whether to recommend changes in the University’s current policies and procedures with respect to certificates at both the graduate level and the undergraduate level.

Committee membership included the following Faculty Senate Council and administrative constituencies: the Chair of the Academic Matters Council or a designee; the Chair of the Undergraduate Education Council or a designee; the Chair of the Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee of the Graduate Council or a designee; the Chair of the Graduate Council or a designee; the Chair of the Program and Budget Council or a designee; the Chair of the Academic Priorities Council or a designee; the Chair of the University Service, Public Service and Outreach Council or a designee; the Chair of the Rules Committee or a designee; the Dean of the Graduate School or a designee; the Vice Provost for Outreach or a designee; the Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Assessment or a designee; the Deputy Provost or a designee; the Executive Director of Five Colleges, Inc. or a designee; the Secretary of the Faculty Senate; and two members of the Faculty at large, selected by the Committee on Committees.

Purpose:

1. To deliberate the current and proposed graduate and undergraduate certificate programs; to determine the relation between certificates and current policy; to consider whether it is generally desirable and appropriate for the University to expand its curricular offerings through the development of certificates; and to determine whether to recommend changes in the University’s current policies and procedures with respect to certificates at both the graduate level and the undergraduate level.
2. The Ad Hoc Committee shall proceed to deliberate conceptual and operational questions including but not necessarily limited to the following:
 - a. *Undergraduate vs. Graduate.* Presently, there is a single definition and approval process for certificates. Perspectives at the two levels seem to be diverging. Should the approval policy and procedure reflect this divergence?
 - b. *Program level and focus.* Presently, the minimum requirements for a certificate are completion of five courses. Increasingly, certificate proposals (especially at the graduate level) are becoming more and more elaborate and taking on characteristics of degree programs. What are the implications of this? Should the policy address this issue?
 - c. *Overlap with degree programs.* The current policy requires that certificates “extend beyond the requirements of any individual major.” Increasingly, certificate proposals are paralleling or overlapping degree requirements. How can this be resolved?
 - d. *Eligibility and admissions.* The current policy makes no reference to eligibility for or admission to certificate programs (perhaps, because it assumes that all students eligible for certificates are already matriculated students), yet proposals increasingly include

elaborate admissions policies for non-matriculated students. Are separate admissions procedures appropriate for some or all certificate programs? Should each certificate program designate criteria for eligibility, whether for matriculated or non-matriculated students? How should these questions be addressed, and how will the cumulative resource implications of such admissions procedures be addressed?

- e. *Relationship to existing degree programs.* Some certificate programs seem to be designed as “stepping stones” into degree programs, but current regulations constrain the transfer of credits earned in “non-degree” status into degree programs. Should the policy which imposes such constraints be modified?
- f. *Resources.* Certificate proposals universally state that “no additional resources are needed” (often adding “at this time.”), yet proposals position certificates as a means of expanding enrollment. How should we think about this, especially with respect to departments already struggling to meet their current obligations? Resources may be needed for the administration of certificates, or for separate admissions programs, or to ensure the continuity of cross-departmental courses that constitute a certificate.

The committee was instructed to provide a progress report at the meeting of the Faculty Senate on April 24, 2008, and to submit its final report on or before June 16, 2008.

(2) Membership and meetings:

Membership was designed to include all major faculty and administrative constituencies with an interest in graduate and undergraduate certificates, and included:

Chair, Academic Matters Council or a designee	Carol Barr
Chair, Undergraduate Education Council or a designee	William S. McClure
Chair, Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee of the Graduate Council or a designee	Arthur Kinney
Chair, Graduate Council or a designee	Jane Baran
Chair, Program and Budget Council or a designee	Norman Sims
Chair, Academic Priorities Council or a designee	Anne C. Moore
Chair, University Service, Public Service and Outreach Council or a designee	Dan Gerber
Chair, Rules Committee or a designee	Maurianne Adams
Dean, Graduate School or a designee	Nigar Khan/Patricia Stowell
Vice Provost for Outreach or a designee	Cynthia Suopis
Associate Provost, Academic Planning and Assessment or a designee	Bryan C. Harvey
Deputy Provost or a designee	John Cunningham
Executive Director, Five Colleges, Inc. or a designee	Lorna Peterson/Nate Therien
Secretary, Faculty Senate	Ernest May
Two Members of the Faculty, at large	Sonia Alvarez/Chris Roberts

ACERT met 6 times during the Spring 2008 semester, on March 5th, April 16, April 30, May 7, May 21, and June 5th and was co-chaired by Maurianne Adams (Rules Committee) and Bryan Harvey (Associate Provost). The committee reviewed numerous documents, including UMA graduate and undergraduate course, certificate, and program approval policies and procedures, and prior legislation emending approval policies and procedures regarding certificates. We reviewed a document that proposed new approval policies and procedures for graduate certification programs developed by the Graduate School (based on the University of Florida model) and we also reviewed the approval policies in use by Five Colleges Inc., as well as models from the University of Florida, Ohio State, Penn State, and the University of Wisconsin. We read examples of current UMA and Five Colleges Inc. certificate programs. We analyzed the various impediments to approval presented by new UMA certificates currently in the approval pipeline.

We held extensive discussions to determine (1) the sorts of activities we hoped to encourage with graduate and undergraduate certificates, (2) the definition(s) we hoped would cover the broad range of current as well as proposed undergraduate and graduate certificates, and (3) the current policies and processes we would need to change or create in order to establish these outcomes. We considered the merits of various certificate models – such as certificates that provided “building blocks” into undergraduate majors or graduate programs of study (“step-up” or “transition” certificates) designed for non-matriculating students; free-standing certificates, mainly professional or applied, with applicability both to matriculating and non-matriculating students; certificates that constituted a subset of majors or programs or constituted cross-disciplinary areas of interest to matriculating and/or non-matriculating students. The committee did not take up the question of non-credit certificates, an area that remained outside our Faculty Senate charge.

By current definition, “a certificate program involves specialized areas of study, from which a significant proportion of the requirements must go beyond the requirements of any specific major.” Policies generated by this definition generally predate the online era and do not address challenges posed by off-campus, non-matriculating certificate populations. The “significant proportion” stipulation raises questions about boundaries between undergraduate majors or minors and/or graduate programs of study, and certificates, an issue posed by several certificates awaiting approval, and not approvable by current policy. A certificate currently consists of “at least 15 credits in a coherent set of courses,” but no more than 29 credits maximum, in that an entity of 30 credits is considered an “academic program” and reviewed as such. Current policy requires that certificates “extend beyond the requirements of any individual major.”

The committee devoted considerable attention to all of these questions, including the different challenges posed by non-matriculated students, in that an increasing number of certificate proposals in the queue appeared to encourage participation among off-campus, non-matriculated students. This question involved the relationship of certificates to already established majors and programs of study, and the question of admission for non-matriculating participants directly into certificates – and in some cases subsequently through matriculation to majors or programs of study.

The committee was assisted by several guest presenters, including Sharon Fross (Vice Provost for Outreach), John Lenzi and Cynthia Boissonneault (Registrar and Associate Registrar). John Lenzi participated in several meetings and provided important support and insight.

The committee reached consensus about our intention to facilitate approval of various categories of certificates – graduate or undergraduate, cross-disciplinary or program subsets, free-standing or building blocks (we called these “step-up” or “transitional”) – and that we wanted to facilitate the entry of non-matriculating participants as well as matriculated students.

This led us to think about changes in current policy, such that certificates would be student-referenced rather than tied through restrictions to current programs of study. This shift in focus would enable courses to serve dual purposes, depending on the status of a student in a program of study and/or certificate program. We also agreed that certificate proposers (that is, faculty in concentrations/departments) would be responsible for designating admissions procedures (for matriculated and non-matriculated students) as well as procedures by which non-matriculated students might be able to apply for matriculation in degree programs and thus be able to transfer courses tied to a certificate.

By May 21st, we had developed a proposal, which we were able to approve in principle at our June 5th meeting and refine electronically by the end of June. What follows has been approved unanimously by the members of the committee. The proposal includes a definition of certificates, clarification about matriculating and non-matriculating students in certificates, processes by which non-matriculating students can expect to use certificate-based courses for programs of study, and suggestions as to the further areas of clarification for consideration by appropriate Faculty Senate Councils. The proposal includes GPA guidelines, a sunset/review clause for certificates, and a description for “transitional” (or step-up) certificates that would reach off-campus populations and enable them to move gradually into UMA matriculating status.

As a separately voted issue, the committee agreed “Certificates approved prior to September 2008 remain in force. Changes consistent with the revised policy may be processed as program revisions at any time. Renewal of existing certificates will occur on a schedule to be developed by the Academic Matters Council and the Graduate Council and approved by the Faculty Senate.”

The committee asks that Faculty Senate Councils move as quickly as possible to approve or revise these recommendations, so that a number of certificate proposals, currently in queue at the Academic Matters Council and Graduate Council, can be considered in the light of these or other newly developed certificate policies and procedures.

(3) Text of the ACERT proposal:

A certificate program is a coherent set of courses representing a defined body of knowledge and skills. Certificates may represent a subset of the requirements for existing degree programs; may reflect a multidisciplinary perspective drawing coursework from more than one existing program; or may constitute a relatively free-standing area of focus with little formal connection to existing academic programs.

A certificate program must consist of at least fifteen credits of coursework. Certificates of fifteen but fewer than thirty credits will be considered through the program revision process. Certificates of thirty credits or greater will be considered through the academic program approval process.

Certificates are open to all students, undergraduate and graduate, matriculating or non-matriculating, subject to availability of courses and unless otherwise restricted. If additional restrictions are to apply, they must be specified in detail in the certificate proposal and prominently displayed in all descriptions of the certificate program.

The Graduate Council and the Academic Matters Council shall develop guidelines for approval and review of graduate and undergraduate certificates, respectively, pertaining to the following issues, as well as other issues that come to the attention of the Councils:

- Specific admissions criteria and procedures, if any, for matriculated and/or non-matriculated students.
- Availability of component courses, and access to those courses for certificate students.

- **Criteria for certificate program coherence.**
- **Explicit evaluation plan (such as numerical data on admissions, completions, availability of faculty and courses, student evaluations) for the purposes of review and continuation.**

Completion of a certificate requires a GPA of 2.000 in the courses used to satisfy the requirements for an undergraduate certificate, and 3.000 for a graduate certificate, unless a higher requirement is approved as part of a certificate proposal. No more than one of these courses may have a grade of less than 2.000 for either an undergraduate or graduate certificate. The official transcript will provide evidence of completion of a certificate, and the Registrar will arrange for issuance of a certificate document, as well. A student who has completed the requirements for a certificate should contact the sponsoring department or program, which will notify the Registrar that the requirements have been met. Completion of a certificate may be posted to a student's transcript at any time. Once completed, a certificate remains on the student's transcript permanently.

Certificates will remain in force for five years following their approval. In the fourth year, the sponsoring department or program of each certificate shall file a renewal request with the Faculty Senate Office, describing the status of and activity within the certificate program according to guidelines established by the Academic Matters Council and the Graduate Council. Continuation of the certificate program for each additional five-year term will require the approval of the Faculty Senate upon the recommendation of the appropriate council. In the case of certificates involving agreements among the Five Colleges, the review process in the agreement will govern. In the event that renewal is not approved, or a request for renewal is not filed, the certificate program will be phased out. Students may complete the requirements of a certificate within two years of expiration of the certificate program, subject to the availability of courses.

Certain certificates may be designated as "transitional," indicating that upon completion the coursework may be applied toward the requirements of an academic degree program.

- **The certificate proposal must clearly identify what courses may be applied to what set(s) of program requirements;**
- **This information must be prominently displayed in all descriptions of the certificate program;**
- **Completion of a transitional certificate does not imply admission to the University or a specific academic program. Non-matriculating students who wish to apply transitional certificate coursework to a degree program must satisfy all relevant University admissions requirements and requirements for the specific program to which they seek to apply the coursework.**
- **If a non-matriculating student completes the requirements for a transitional certificate, and is subsequently accepted for admission to the appropriate degree program, then the coursework specified as applicable to the program will be transferred notwithstanding general policies governing transfer of credit.**

Certificates approved prior to September 2008 remain in force. Changes consistent with the revised policy may be processed as program revisions at any time. Renewal of existing certificates will occur on a schedule to be developed by the Academic Matters Council and the Graduate Council and approved by the Faculty Senate.

MOVED: 02-09 That the Faculty Senate receive the Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Certificates, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 09-001.

26-09 That the Faculty Senate approve the Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Certificates, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 09-001.