

## CAP's Final Recommendation on Graduate Certificate Programs

TO: Steering Committee

FROM: Committee on Academic Programs

RE: Final Recommendation on Graduate Certificate Programs

DATE: May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016

### **Background:**

On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, CAP received a charge from the Steering Committee that quoted a memo sent by Assistant Provost Jennifer Palmgren of the Office of Academic Affairs. The memo noted that “the Graduate Certificate Programs policy currently requires proposals for graduate certificate programs to follow the same approval process as proposals for degree programs” and that “CAP...should consider whether program approval processes should distinguish between graduate certificate programs and degree programs. The state requirements for the two, for example, are different.”

### **Testimony:**

Steering noted that CAP should “seek input from the Graduate Program Council, Department Chairs of programs that offer graduate certificates, and Deans, as well as other stakeholders deemed appropriate by CAP.” CAP should then prepare a preliminary recommendation and gather testimony from “faculty, students, and staff via public fora and digital forms of information gathering.” CAP’s discussion of this charge noted that the program approval process is too lengthy and cumbersome for a stand-alone graduate certificate, and that approval for such certificates should follow the protocol used for minors rather than that used for degree programs. CAP’s position on this matter was communicated to the Graduate Programs Council (GPC) through the leadership of that council (Professors Lisa Ortiz and Stuart Carroll) on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016. GPC responded on April 7, 2016 that they had unanimously approved the proposed revision regarding the approval process for a graduate certificate program. GPC also recommended that it be consulted during Phase 1 of the minor approval process (“Program Proposal Development”). GPC also recommended some revisions to the definition of a graduate certificate. Following this communication with GPC, on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 an email was sent to deans, chairs of departments that offer graduate certificates, and coordinators of graduate certificate programs (found at <https://graduate.tcnj.edu/academic-programs/certificate-programs/>) requesting comment and feedback. Testimony was also collected at an open forum held on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Based on the responses received and CAP’s discussion of them, the proposed revisions and suggested changes to the Graduate Certificate Programs policy are outlined below.

**Recommendation:**

1) That the section of the policy document on Graduate Certificate Programs labeled “III. Policy” be amended as follows:

This currently reads:

“By a stand-alone graduate certificate program we understand a sequence of semester-long courses leading to the awarding of a certification of completion of a prescribed course of graduate study. This definition is intended to exclude graduate degree programs, post-baccalaureate, post-masters, and post-doctoral certificate programs linked to an external professional certification or licensure, and short continuing education courses.”

...and should be changed to:

“By a stand-alone graduate certificate program we understand a sequence of **transcripted, graduate-level credit bearing** courses leading to the awarding of a certification of completion of a prescribed course of graduate study. This definition is intended to exclude graduate degree programs, post-baccalaureate, post-masters, and post-doctoral certificate programs linked to an external professional certification or licensure, and **non-credit bearing, continuing education courses**.”

2) That letter “e” of section “A” of the policy document for Graduate Certificate Programs labeled “Governing Principle” be amended as follows:

This currently reads:

All stand-alone graduate certificate programs should go through the same approval process developed through the college governance process for full graduate programs.

...and should be changed to:

All stand-alone graduate certificate programs should go through the same process developed through the college governance process for approval of a minor.

The revised approval process for a stand-alone Graduate Certificate is outlined below.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This policy explains the process by which new graduate certificate programs are developed, reviewed and approved.

## II. DEFINITIONS

By a stand-alone graduate certificate program we understand a sequence of transcribed, graduate-level credit bearing courses leading to the awarding of a certificate of completion of a prescribed course of graduate study. This definition is intended to exclude graduate degree programs, post-baccalaureate, post-masters, and post-doctoral certificate programs linked to an external professional certification or licensure, and non-credit bearing, continuing education courses.

## III. POLICY

### Phase I: Program Proposal Development

Proposals for new graduate certificate programs begin in an academic unit of the campus, i.e., from a department or program, with thoughtful consideration of the rationale, need, and demand for the program, and whether it is consistent with the mission of the Department, School, and College. Such discussions must take place under the auspices of the departmental curriculum committee (if applicable) and departmental committee of the whole. In the case of interdisciplinary programs, the home department must consult with all academic departments involved in the graduate certificate as well. The Graduate Programs Council (GPC) must also be consulted during this phase of the approval process.

The formal proposal must include a brief description of the graduate certificate that includes the rationale, need, and demand for it. The proposal must also include a detailed outline of the curriculum, course syllabi, and any needed resources from all academic and nonacademic units involved such as:

1. faculty and support of instruction;
2. library resources;
3. equipment, laboratory support, computer support;
4. facilities.

The formal proposal must undergo department-level review (again, by the departmental curriculum committee, if applicable, and committee of the whole) determining whether the proposed program is consistent with the mission of the Department, School, and College. The program proposal along with the New Graduate Certificate form must then be signed by the department Chairperson. In the case of interdisciplinary programs, all departments included in the certificate program must review the proposal (by the departmental curriculum committee, if applicable, and committee of the whole). Documentation of approval (signature of departmental Chairpersons or confirmation email) must be appended to the program proposal. Programs that

are not interdisciplinary but include a course(s) from a department(s) other than the department which is proposing the graduate certificate must be reviewed by the department(s) in which the specific course(s) is housed.

#### Phase II: Preliminary Review by Dean(s)

The appropriate Dean (or Deans in the case of interdisciplinary programs) must conduct a preliminary review of the proposal, considering whether the program is consistent with the mission of the School(s) and College and can be adequately supported with resources.

#### Phase III: School Curriculum Committee and Governance

After the proposal has been approved by all departments contributing courses to it and given preliminary approval by the Dean(s), the proposal is submitted to the school curriculum committee of the home department, as well as to the committees of all schools included in the certificate program in the case of an interdisciplinary program. The role of the school curriculum committee(s) is to ensure that all procedures have been followed in the approval process and that the proposed program is consistent with the mission of the School and College. If recommended by the school committee(s), the program is resubmitted to the relevant Dean(s) for final approval. After the relevant Dean(s) have approved the proposed graduate certificate, the proposal is submitted to the College's Steering Committee to be forwarded to the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP) for review and recommendation, according to the steps of the Governance Process. All programs involving teacher education and preparation should be reviewed by the Teacher Education Program Council (TEPC).

#### Phase IV: Final Approval

On completion of the Governance Process, the Provost will grant final approval of the graduate certificate ensuring that it is consistent with the mission of the College and can be adequately supported with resources. Upon approval, the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees and the Academic Issues Committee of the New Jersey Presidents' Council are notified.