

Brothers, Sheila C.

From: Bird-Pollan, Jennifer
Sent: Thursday, December 3, 2020 10:21 AM
To: Brothers, Sheila C.; Cramer, Aaron M.
Cc: Anderson, Kimberly W.; Coleman, Bob; Troland, Thomas H.; Sizemore, Michelle R.; Yost, Scott; Wright, Allison S.; Kirn, John A.; Swanson, Azhar B.; Yost, Scott; Weber, Annie; Osterhage, Jennifer L.
Subject: Re: Change to Senate Rule Regarding Undergraduate Certificates

Dear Chair Cramer,

The Senate Admissions and Academic Standards Committee has considered the attached request from the College of Engineering. In evaluating the request, the Committee considered the larger question of what role the limitation of nine hours plays in restricting how many credits a student can use to satisfy the requirements of both a degree program and an undergraduate certificate. After a robust discussion of the rule, the Committee voted unanimously to **strike the entirety of the sentence “No more than nine credits taken for a certificate can be used to satisfy the requirements for the student’s bachelor’s degree, a minor, or another certificate, exclusive of free or unrestricted electives,”** which is found in Senate Rule 3.1.1.2. We propose that this rule change be effective immediately.

In discussing this rule, the Committee felt that the limitation created by this sentence does not serve a clearly defined justifiable academic purpose. Assistant Provost Annie Davis Weber confirmed that allowing courses to count for both a certificate and another degree program would not violate SACSCOC or CPE rules, as certificates are not guided by rules at those levels. Further, the Senate’s review process for the creation of certificates will ensure that certificates will not duplicate each other to an unacceptable degree. In addition, permitting credits taken for an undergraduate certificate to count towards a degree program without limitation will provide a valuable complement to a rule change approved recently by the Senate. Now that non-degree students can enroll in undergraduate certificates, the Committee believes that some non-degree students will enroll in undergraduate certificates, find value in those programs, and then eventually enroll in a degree program. Allowing those students to use the credits earned in the certificate program to count towards the degree program will provide an added incentive to them to contemplate enrolling in the degree program. The Committee thinks this situation is one to be encouraged, and believes removing the limiting sentence from the Senate Rules will have the benefit of facilitating such situations.

The Committee believes that permitting faculty to create certificate programs that allow students to demonstrate mastery, even if the credits used for that certificate overlap with credits used for a degree program, will be to the advantage of both students and faculty, and thus unanimously recommends this change.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bird-Pollan

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am writing to request that the Senate consider modifying the last paragraph of Senate Rule 4.2.8 (Undergraduate Certificates) as follows;

“No more than nine credits taken for a certificate can be used to satisfy the requirements for the student’s bachelor’s degree, a minor, or another certificate, exclusive of ~~free or unrestricted~~ electives.”

Justification:

1. The Senate agreed to allow programs to remove the “free elective” from their curricula if they desired. Therefore, the College of Engineering no longer has “free electives”.
2. The definition of “unrestrictive electives” can be ambiguous. In Engineering, the majority of our electives are “technical electives”. While it is required that they must be technical, students are able to choose these electives based on their interests and chosen focus of study. It is very common for students to want to use these electives to satisfy the requirements for the certificates (i.e. a specific interest or concentration that they chose to pursue).
3. Our students are required to complete 128 hours for their degrees. Adding additional hours for certificate completion is burdensome and in many cases, will delay their graduation rate. If electives can count for certificate completion, this will assist with the goal of increasing the 4-year graduation rate.
4. To the best of our knowledge, using electives to satisfy minor requirements are not restricted to certain electives. It does not make sense to have this restriction with certificates.

I will be happy to meet with the Councils to discuss this request.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Anderson
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Associate Dean, College of Engineering
Professor, Chemical and Materials Engineering

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