Graduate School
Oregon State University
Proposal for Policy for Revocation of Graduate Degree

Background
Although extremely uncommon, occasions arise when allegations of serious scholarly misconduct bring into question the award of a graduate degree. Issues can occur before or after certification of the degree. In these cases, Oregon State University currently relies upon two processes to determine appropriate action, but both policies lack features needed to address revocation of a graduate-level degree:

1) Student Conduct Code (OAR 576-015), in particular section 0030 “Sanctions”; 1
2) Oregon State University Procedures for Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct 2
   a) The Student Conduct Code lists a full range of academic or scholarly dishonesty topics; offenses are reported by use of the Academic Dishonesty Report. Although degree revocation is listed in item 13 of sanctions, details are lacking. The Student Conduct Code is undergraduate-centric in focus. Offenses are often at the course level and although reviewed by the Graduate School dean with sanctions determined and recommended by the dean, the Office of Student Conduct, which reports to the OSU Dean of Student Affairs, is heavily involved in communication and follow up with the student. Generally, the appeal process for offenses reviewed at a SCCS Hearing does not adequately involve the Graduate School dean or other graduate faculty and administrators most likely to understand graduate education and the graduate degree granting processes.
   b) Although the Research Office’s procedures for handling research misconduct clearly define misconduct and outline a thorough and inclusive process, they do not specifically address revocation of a graduate degree.

A clearly defined degree revocation process with oversight by the faculties and academic branches of the university is preferable. However, legal precedents should be carefully reviewed by the Oregon State Legal Counsel’s office to determine which entities at OSU hold the legal right to revoke a graduate degree and whether proposed protocols for due process meet legal standards.

With the above caution in mind, the Graduate School proposes that steps be taken to ensure necessary faculty and academic administration involvement in the revocation of graduate degrees while ensuring consistent review and actions.

DRAFT Policy Proposal
Reporting Options
The Graduate Academic Dishonesty Report Form (ADRF) should be revised to reflect various points of initiation for claims of academic dishonesty involving theses, other capstone work, or final examinations for degree. The current form focuses upon instructor reporting of dishonesty, primarily in a course setting.3

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2 [http://oregonstate.edu/research/ori/scientific_misconduct](http://oregonstate.edu/research/ori/scientific_misconduct)
3 [http://oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/academic-misconduct-reporting-forms](http://oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/academic-misconduct-reporting-forms)
Notifications

Students or past students reported for academic dishonesty of this seriousness must be notified in writing within 10 working days of the charges reaching the Dean of the Graduate School. If the report does not initiate from within the academic program that is or was home to the student, the chair of the program or department must be notified within 5 working days of receipt of the report.

Response

The person charged with misconduct must be given 20 working days to respond in writing to claims made. This response must be available to the review panel at the time they convene.

Review Panel

The Graduate Dean will convene a panel to be comprised of X graduate faculty members (from within and outside of the program of the student?), a representative of the Vice President for Research if appropriate, and a graduate student liaison. The panel will have access to detailed information regarding the alleged misconduct and the response submitted by the student or alum.

Standards for revocation of degree

Clear and supportable evidence of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism involved in research leading to a thesis or final project, or the content of the thesis or final project is required for revocation of the graduate degree.

Authority for revocation

Upon review of the panel’s deliberations, the Graduate Dean may recommend revocation of the degree or other actions. This decision will be reviewed by the Provost and can be appealed in writing to the Provost or his/her designee. The decision upon appeal will be final.

Consequences

1) At discretion of the Review Panel and if agreed by the Dean of the Graduate School, a student could be allowed to re-enroll for the purpose of rewriting the thesis. If allowed, the major professor and committee of the graduate student must agree to mentor the student to completion and examination of the new thesis or final project;
2) If the degree is revoked, upon notice, the Registrar’s office of the University will note revocation of the degree upon the student record; transcripts issued within the past X time should be reissued and include notification of degree revocation (or we could just remove the degree awarded information). Any vendor currently authorized to confirm completion of OSU graduate degrees (e.g. National Student Clearinghouse) will be notified of the action of revocation.
3) If the panel finds that the charges are unfounded or not supported by adequate evidence, the student or alum should be notified and all possible steps taken to restore any damage to the charged person’s reputation.
4) Other consequences?