

June 12, 2003

During the previous Graduate Council meeting, Council members discussed a possible reduction in the minimum number of credits required for a graduate certificate.

Selker asked whether the Faculty Senate would also be voting on this proposal, as was done with the original proposal in 2000. Francis said that the earlier proposal created a brand new credential not previously awarded at Oregon State University. Creation of a new type of credential required full consultation and approval from Oregon State University and acceptance by the Oregon University System. In contrast, because this is a change in an approved graduate policy, she does not believe that the full approval process is needed. Because Portland State University's guidelines allow as few as 15 credits for a graduate certificate, 18 credits at OSU should not create concerns at the OUS level. Rettig noted that the Sustainable Natural Resources (SNR) Certificate proposal, if approved in its 18-credit version, would allow all bodies to consider this change. If the SNR 18-credit proposal passes the Graduate Council, the Curriculum Council, and the Faculty Senate and is approved by OUS, all these bodies would implicitly be endorsing the new 18 credit allowance. At any step, they could explicitly debate the change. If they disagreed with the new guidelines, they could return the SNR proposal to the Graduate Council with a request to consider the 24-credit version offered as an alternative.

Selker observed that 24 credits exceeds the maximum credits permitted for graduate students (16) for a single academic term. Normally, an 18 credit graduate certificate would have to be associated with two or more quarters. Rettig said that the decision to change to 18 credits, if approved by the Graduate Council, would be communicated to the Curriculum Council and Faculty Senate so that they could decide if they want to decide the questions (approval of the SNR certificate and approval of the new 18 credit minimum requirement) as two separate issues. Although he was concerned about the lack of justification for the change, Selker indicated that he would favor an 18-credit certificate. Francis said that the original number (24) was decided by a sub-committee of the Council. She believed that this group chose this number because it was toward the high end of the number of credits in graduate certificate programs across the country. That number was also chosen by the committee as an indication of the rigor of the program. Feller noted that 18 is an appropriate number of credits because it is more than what is required for a minor, but less than what is required for a full major. Francis noted that this is a credential that can be earned, can be hung on a wall and can serve as a proof of achievement at the graduate level, even if one never earns a graduate degree. Gobeli suggested that market demand would be even greater if the number were 15. The Graduate Council may face pressure to lower it to 15 in the future and may wish to consider that lower number at this time. Selker suggested that students who are earning the certificate would be allowed to register for 18 credits per term without having to fill out the Course Overload forms. Rettig said that course overload forms for 18 credits are currently approved whenever students are informed that additional costs will be levied on the student (the current registration plateau allows one bill for anywhere from 9 to 16 credits) as long as the student has a strong academic record and is not likely to face academic difficulties by carrying this higher load.

The Council approved a motion to reduce the minimum number of credits from 24 to 18. The revised policy on graduate certificates now reads:

*The Graduate Certificate Program at Oregon State University is a structured progression of graduate level courses that constitute a coherent body of study with a defined focus within a single discipline or a logical combination of disciplines. It is designed for a student who has completed a baccalaureate degree and is in pursuit of advanced-level learning. **Graduate certificates reflect the educational mission of the University.** All certificate programs require a minimum of eighteen (18) graduate credits with a cumulative grade point average of 3.00 or greater. Students desiring a graduate certificate must be admitted to the University as a credential-seeking graduate student, but are not required to be on track for a specific degree. There is no formal committee requirement for graduate certificates. Certificate students are subject to all general policies governing the courses for the Master's Degree.*

In addition to approving a change in minimum credits for a graduate certificate, the Council also adopted a proportionally lower number of credits that would be allowed as transfer credits. Instead of the previous allowance of 8 transfer credits (one-third of 24), the number of allowable transfer credits toward a graduate certificate is now 6 (one-third of 18). The section of the guidelines for implementing the graduate certificate policy that refers to these numbers now reads:

The certificate curriculum is a structured progression or collection of courses approved and offered for graduate degree credit at OSU. The curriculum consists of a minimum of eighteen (18) quarter credit hours, and may include a final project, portfolio, or report for integration of the sequence of course materials. Up to 6 quarter credit hours may be transferred toward an 18 credit hour graduate certificate.