

TO: Craig Henriquez
Chair, Academic Council

FROM: Bruce Cunningham
Assistant Vice Provost, University Registrar and
Director, Student Service Center

Dori Taylor Sullivan, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
School of Nursing

DATE: September 4, 2009

SUBJECT: September and December Degree Posting Delays

As you are probably aware, we cannot post degrees on students' academic records until the Academic Council and the Executive Committee of the Board have officially approved them. In May this works well, given meeting schedules, and prior to the commencement ceremony degrees have been approved and can be officially posted on students' records. Thus, students can obtain proof of degree receipt (transcripts and degree certifications) and copies of their diplomas at that point.

The situation for September and December graduates is quite different. For quite some time we have encountered difficulties with the long delay between the end of the semester, and the official degree award dates of September 1 and December 30, and the time the Academic Council and Board meets and approves these degrees. While the Board issue has now been addressed, the schedule of the Academic Council approval continues to create delays. These delays prevent us from being able to certify awarding of degrees for students and external parties causing significant hardships, some of which are listed below.

1. Students seeking professional certification, employment, or admission to further education are, at the very least, inconvenienced, and sometimes delayed in these activities by the delay in degree posting. The graduate school and several of the professional schools, along with The Office of the University Registrar, spend considerable staff resources certifying completion of degree requirements pending final approval of degrees. While these certifications are usually accepted, they create an unnecessary obstacle for these students and quite a bit of extra work for the offices involved.

A prime example of these problems can be found in the School of Nursing, where students wishing to sit for Board licensing or certification

exams must prove the fulfillment of degree requirements. Increasingly, the licensing and certification bodies are unwilling to accept anything other than a certified official transcript. For masters' degree students pursuing advanced practice nursing licensure the situation is even more egregious because these graduates must become certified before they can even apply for an advanced practice nursing license. The end result is that some graduates are unable to seek employment for three to four months or more after completing degree requirements.

Even those not requiring immediate certification of their degree still find it frustrating that they don't have official certifications of their degrees or receive their diplomas until late September or early February.

In addition to the significant problems just described, this situation negatively influences graduates who are now alumni and leaves them wondering why this wonderful institution that provided such an outstanding educational experience seems unwilling or unable to address these issues.

2. We report to various loan agencies, both private and governmental, when students have completed their degree programs, so the loan repayment process can begin. In many cases we are required to make such reports within a certain amount of time after students complete their degrees and right now we have no way of doing so until the degrees are officially approved and posted to their records.
3. Similarly, we are required to report to the Department of Homeland Security when any foreign students have completed their degree requirements within 30 days after the degree completion date. Currently, in order to do this for December graduates we must provide manually compiled lists to the International Office, which then must report these completions, even though they are unofficial until approved by the Council and the Board. If we do not report this within that time frame we are in violation of the federal government's immigration reporting requirements.

While the final two points are critical issues, we think the most important issue is the inconvenience we cause our graduates when we cannot provide certification of degree completion for as much as a month past the degree completion date. Over the years the number of graduates in September and December has grown. We currently average around 500 September graduates and around 650 December graduates, across all schools and colleges.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important matter. We are hopeful that the Academic Council will find a way to address this issue. The staff and faculty in the various schools, as well as all of our September and December graduates would be delighted to see this happen. Please let us know if there is any additional information that we can provide to you or anything else you would like us to do to move this matter along.

Cc: Peter Lange, Provost