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Undergraduate Certificate Committee Final Report, May 31, 2003

Faculty Council
Eastern Michigan University

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**UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE COMMITTEE
FINAL REPORT**

31 May 2003

I. INTRODUCTION.

Undergraduate certificates in conjunction with a baccalaureate degree are offered at many of Eastern Michigan University's peer institutions and fellow Mid-American Conference (MAC) universities. The Office of Course and Program Development has received a number of Undergraduate Certificate program proposals. However, EMU does not currently offer undergraduate certificates. Given the dynamic nature of Eastern Michigan University, the division must periodically revisit the University's mission and evaluate how the needs of our students are best served.

II. COMMITTEE FORMATION.

Dr. Michael Harris, the Associate Provost, in the *Charge To The Undergraduate Certificate Program Committee* memorandum dated 13 September 2002, formed the committee, under the leadership of Dr. Max Kanagy, Associate Dean for the College of Technology. The committee was charged with evaluating whether it is appropriate, within the context of the University mission, to offer undergraduate certificates. Details of the committee announcement are at enclosure 1.

The committee was structured to ensure faculty and senior staff representation from all colleges. Further, it was augmented with representatives from academic support offices to provide needed functional insights. The latter were non-voting members and served to support the committee's academic decisions. The committee structure consisted of the following:

Voting Members:

- Max Kanagy, Associate Dean in the College of Technology, (chair).
- 4 Department Head representatives, one from each of the other four colleges: Arts and Sciences, Business, Education and Health and Human Services.
- 5 Representatives from Faculty Council, one from each college.
- The Director of Community College Relations.

Support Staff:

- A representative from the Academic Advising Center.
- A representative from Admissions.
- A representative from Financial Aid.
- A representative from Continuing Education.
- A representative from Records and Registration.
- The Director of Program and Catalog Maintenance.

The Committee roster is at enclosure 2.

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Committee Meeting Schedule. The committee maintained the following meeting schedule:

- Friday, 20 September 2002 1:30 - 3:30 PM
- Friday, 4 October 2002 1:00 - 3:00 PM
- Friday, 18 October 2002 1:00 - 3:00 PM
- Friday, 1 November 2002 1:00 - 3:00 PM
- Friday, 22 November 2002 1:30 - 3:00 PM
- Friday, 6 December 2002 1:30 - 3:00 PM
- Friday, 17 January 2003 1:00 - 2:30 PM
- Friday, 31 January 2003 1:00 - 2:45 PM
- Friday, 14 February 2003 1:00 - 2:30 PM
- Friday, 14 March 2003 1:00 - 2:15 PM

Meeting agendas and minutes are supplied at enclosure 3.

Charge to the Committee. In the *Charge To The Undergraduate Certificate Committee* memorandum dated 13 September 2002, the Associate Provost directed the committee to evaluate whether awarding an undergraduate certificate is a valid higher education role for Eastern Michigan University by:

- Defining the viability, role and mission of an undergraduate certificate offered in conjunction with, or subsequent to, a baccalaureate within the university curriculum.
- Creating guidelines and requirements to ensure academic rigor and maintain university credibility.
- Establishing or modifying existing administrative functions that would be needed to support an undergraduate certificate programs.
- Establishing appropriate interactions within the existing university policies and procedures, such as but not limited to the Course and Program Development System and the university catalog.
- Establishing an oversight structure with appropriate levels of authorization and accountability to work within existing university policies and procedures.
- Determining how an undergraduate certificate program should be handled within the Program Review process.
- Listing and prioritizing existing certificate proposals.
- Identifying possible affects on community college relations, the transfer process and transferring students.
- Identifying Banner implementation challenges facing the Offices of Financial Aid, Admissions, and Records and Registration.

The committee issued a written status report to the Office of the Associate Provost on 10 December 2002 with a final report submitted by 31 May 2003. The Associate Provost was to present both the reports to the Deans Advisory Council.

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III. COMMITTEE PROCESS.

The Undergraduate Certificate Committee explored the various types of certificates available to students by researching both journal literature and the internet. Keith Stanger, a reference librarian, conducted an extensive search for academic literature concerning undergraduate certificates. His search did not produce any information. He concluded that there is no body of academic literature concerning undergraduate certificates.

Since academic literature was unavailable, the committee focused solely on benchmarking. The committee specifically looked for the rationale within peer and fellow MAC institutions for offering undergraduate certificates in conjunction with a baccalaureate. Initially it was important to find some definition to what certificate meant within academia. The committee began their information search with benchmark surveys on the internet. Both peer and fellow MAC institutions were investigated. Following the benchmark surveys, telephone surveys were conducted with several peer and other MAC institutions that offered undergraduate certificate programs.

After discussing the initial research on undergraduate certificates, the committee wanted information on how potential employers viewed students with undergraduate certificates. So concurrent with the benchmark and telephone surveys, a job market survey was conducted. The committee discussed the research and survey information gathered, and then focused on implementation issues that might arise if the University offered undergraduate certificates in conjunction with a baccalaureate degree. As the survey information was considered, the committee proceeded by consensus. Voting members of the committee believed it was important to have a consensus among the non-voting members, and often achieved this through extensive discussion.

Benchmark Surveys

The committee recognized that benchmarking within both peer and other MAC institutions was vital to the formation of their recommendations. Internet searches were conducted on all peer and fellow MAC institutions. The initial research identified fourteen universities that offer undergraduate certificates. Subsequent research focused on how these institutions developed their undergraduate certificate policies and curricula. Of particular interest to the committee was:

- Structures of certificate programs.
- Differences between a certificate and a minor.
- Credibility of certificates in academe.
- Demand for certificates in the market.

Telephone Surveys

Based on the benchmark survey results, the committee conducted telephone interviews with a sample of peer and other MAC institutions. The committee wanted to know why the faculty had begun to offer certificate programs; how the faculty had developed their certificate programs; how the curriculum was developed, did they use previously existing courses or were new ones created; and what were the benefits to both the program and the students?

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Through a standardized telephone interviews, the committee investigated identified undergraduate certificate programs at: the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, University of Central Florida, Old Dominion University, Akron University, and Ball State University.

- The calls were placed to the coordinator of the certificate program or to another contact named within the certificate program.
- The questions addressed origination of the certificate programs, rationale for certificates, policy development and curriculum, certificate requirements and certificate curriculum.

Market Surveys

As the survey information was considered, committee discussion led to an interest in how the job market and potential employers viewed students with undergraduate certificates.

Although the committee began its research by focusing on undergraduate certificate programs, the focus shifted as discussion raised more questions. The question of how undergraduate certificates were viewed by the academic community, the job market, employers and community colleges became a focal point for further research. An informal literature search was conducted to establish any trends in the market that might demonstrate how employers or academe viewed certificates. Career Services shared the results of a recent employer survey conducted. Internet searches were conducted on area community colleges to establish what type of certificate programs were offered at the community college level. The committee's market survey was conducted in the following ways:

- Gathered more information concerning job market and hiring trends.
- Contacted Career Services for more information concerning employer's needs.
- Generated a list of EMU's feeder community colleges and the certificate programs they offer.

Additional information was provided to the committee during deliberation by Robert Holkeboer, Associate Vice-President for Graduate Studies and Research. Dr. Holkeboer forwarded a copy of *Certificate News*. *Certificate News* reports on certificates from non-credit, to undergraduate, to graduate certificates.

Internal Implementation Considerations:

Once the committee had explored undergraduate certificates by benchmarking, telephone interviews, and a market survey they began assess how undergraduate certificates might be implemented at Eastern Michigan University.

The committee augmented support staff with additional members from the Offices of Admissions, Financial Aid, and Records and Registration. The committee also invited a Records and Registration representative to discuss the Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Preparation Award and how that awards process might work in relation to undergraduate certificates. The committee queried the support staff's knowledge of how they would implement undergraduate certificates within their departments as well as what, if any, implementation problems they could foresee.

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IV. COMMITTEE FINDINGS.

Our peer and fellow MAC institutions have had great success with undergraduate certificates. As the committee assessed market demand and employer needs, it was determined that employers were looking for validated critical additional skills in their employees. As a metropolitan university serving the greater southeast area of Michigan, it is important for our university to look for ways to broaden its appeal to present and future constituents. The committee found that certificate programs are varied and diverse in their implementation and curricula. The committee attempted to focus on universities that require a minor and offer undergraduate certificates. Many institutions, offering undergraduate certificate programs, do not require a minor. The universities interviewed had implemented certificates as a way to provide their students another option beyond the traditional minor to increase their employability. Many universities only grant undergraduate certificates in conjunction with a baccalaureate degree, while other universities offer stand-alone certificates. Some of the universities researched offer both types of certificates. However, the committee did find benchmarks common to most certificate programs.

- Most certificate programs consist of 12-15 credit hours.
- Most consists of upper level courses (300-400), with one introductory class if necessary.
- Certificate programs are different from minors.
- Credits used for certificates cannot be counted for general education requirements.
- Most certificate programs are offered through colleges of Arts and Sciences.
- All classes must be taken at the university awarding the certificate.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Undergraduate Certificate Committee recommends that: (1) Eastern Michigan University offer undergraduate certificates in conjunction with a baccalaureate degree; (2) the certificate curricular guidelines be as flexible as possible in order to allow faculty the freedom to create certificate programs that best serve student educational interests; and, if improved, (3) the implementation plan should address some key issues and concerns raised during the proceeding.

Recommendation 1: Offer Undergraduate Certificates.

The Undergraduate Certificate Committee recommends that Eastern Michigan University offer undergraduate certificates in conjunction with a baccalaureate. It is further recommended that the certificates should only be awarded in conjunction with or subsequent to a baccalaureate, and credits used for a certificate cannot be used to satisfy major, minor, or general education requirements.

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Recommendation 2: Maintain Flexible Curricular Guidelines.

Faculty is vital to the University's mission. If Eastern Michigan University decides to offer undergraduate certificates, the faculty must develop them. The following recommendations are offered:

- Certificates should consist of a minimum of nine credits at the 300-level or above.
- All 300-level and above courses must be taken at EMU.
- Introductory course work could be transferred from another university or community college.
- Courses counted towards a student's major or minor cannot also be counted as credits toward a certificate.

Recommendation 3: Implementation Issues and Concerns.

The Undergraduate Certificate Committee recommends that the following concerns be considered when developing an implementation plan.

- Undergraduate certificates should be incorporated into Program Review.
- Certificates should be proposed by department faculty and processed under the existing procedures for Course and Program Development.
- A formal program announcement for our regional higher education partners should emphasize, undergraduate certificates should only be offered in conjunction with a baccalaureate.
- Offering undergraduate certificates in conjunction with a baccalaureate degree should not cause any implementation challenges for enrollment services.
- The substitution forms currently used for majors and minors could be used with certificate programs.
- Policies for undergraduate certificates should follow policies for undergraduate majors and minors.

VI. CONCLUSION.

The committee unanimously agreed that by offering undergraduate certificate programs in conjunction with a baccalaureate, students would have another opportunity to incorporate additional skills into their undergraduate education. Undergraduate certificates would promote a more flexible learning environment by allowing students to specialize in an area outside of their major and minor areas of study. This individualized focus would allow students to develop additional skills, which should enhance their employability.