Memorandum to Presidents

Date: April 11, 1980

From: Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs, Policy and Planning

Subject: Guidelines on Awarding of Two Degrees at the Same Level

The issue of the awarding of two degrees at the same level has arisen from time to time and has been recently addressed by representative groups throughout the University. There appears to be general support for the draft policy circulated earlier, and I am pleased now to issue it as formal academic policy for the University. In developing these guidelines, an attempt has been made to provide a broad policy framework for a diverse group of campuses. It is expected that each campus will develop its own degree of specificity in interpreting and applying the guidelines.

Guidelines

1. Every campus of the State University shall have a defined, written policy developed by its faculty concerning the awarding of two degrees at the same level, which shall be readily available to students for their information.

2. In general, the campus policy should be in accord with the State Education Department memorandum number 4 to Chief Executive Officers from Alvin P. Lierheimer, dated September 10, 1971.

3. A second degree at the same level may be undertaken concurrently or consecutively, but should be awarded only when a significant amount of additional course work in a very different field is completed.

4. When a student meets the requirements of more than one option or major within a single degree area, a single degree should be awarded rather than two separate degrees.

5. Programs pursued in two different colleges or schools of a campus which lead to two different career objectives may result in the awarding of two degrees, provided degree requirements have been met in each program, and a significant additional amount of course work beyond the single degree requirement has been completed.
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6. Programs pursued in two different colleges or schools of a campus which result simply in a double major within a single program should result in a single degree only. (This does not preclude transfer arrangements under which course work is completed at another institution toward a professional degree and also transferred back for completion of a degree at the initial campus.)

7. At the graduate level, a significant amount of additional study must be undertaken for the attainment of a second degree at the same level and no more than a specified minimal amount of credit should be allowed to overlap between the two programs, if any, in such circumstances.

8. Exceptions to these guidelines may be permitted in special circumstances and should be cleared with the appropriate Vice Chancellor.

In order to avoid excessive specificity, we have avoided prescribing a specific number of credits for an additional degree, and instead have used the word "significant." At the undergraduate level, we believe that a significant amount of additional course work should approximate an additional year of study or something approaching 30 or more credit hours.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this policy.

James E. Perdue

This memorandum addressed to:
Presidents, State-operated Campuses
Presidents, Community Colleges
Deans, Statutory Colleges

Copies for information sent to:
Mrs. Cook
President Neville
MEMORANDUM TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS
OF HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

Subject: Awarding Credit for Same Courses in Different Degree Programs

This memorandum will define the circumstances under which the State Education Department considers it appropriate to give credit for the same course work toward the requirements of different degrees. When a second baccalaureate or associate degree is conferred, it is assumed that a concentration in a second field has likewise been completed in a time span greater than required for one degree. The General Education courses that applied toward the first degree may count toward the Liberal Arts requirement of the second degree.

Further, the conferral of two baccalaureate or associate degrees should be reserved as a means of recognizing that a candidate has competencies in two essentially different areas. For example, if a person obtains a Bachelor of Arts in History, it would be entirely appropriate to confer on him a Bachelor of Business Administration or a Bachelor of Fine Arts, for these degrees represent professional preparations discrete from the learning identified by the Bachelor of Arts. However, it would not be appropriate to confer two Bachelors of Arts for double majors, say in English and Psychology, since multiple academic majors may be properly identified on the diploma. Nor would it be logical to award a Bachelor of Arts for a completed major in English and a Bachelor of Science for a concentration in Chemistry. If the liberal arts content is sufficient, one degree for both fields would be appropriate, for at this time the distinction between a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science in many instances is at best thin, if not completely lost.
In the case of graduate and professional degrees the double counting of courses rarely arises. In some rare instances, however, there may be overlap in requirements. For example, in Law and certain areas of Business Administration there are identical courses required for the degrees. If course work in these instances is truly duplication, it may legitimately be counted as fulfilling the requirements of different degrees.

In the case of combined Bachelors/Masters programs, so long as the outstanding students admitted to these programs successfully complete graduate level courses that assume the more rudimentary knowledge taught on the undergraduate level, or so long as they master graduate courses that cover the content of undergraduate courses, there is no reason why they should not receive both undergraduate and graduate credit for the same work.

Should you have questions that are not adequately covered in this memorandum, Dr. Donald Tritschler, Chief, Bureau of College Evaluation (518-474-2593), or Dr. Edward F. Carr, Director, Division of Higher Education (516-474-3371), are available to provide further information.

Sincerely,

Alvin P. Lierzheiner