

POLICY ON THE GRANTING OF POSTHUMOUS DEGREES

Background

By state statute the faculty have primary responsibility for the academic and educational activities of the institution. This responsibility is codified into *Faculty Policies and Procedures* in several places. The university faculty have the authority for educational policies and for establishing the requirements for graduation and the title of the degree to be conferred upon completion of any course of study. The school/college faculties, among other powers, control matters involving scholarship, including the advancement of students, make recommendations to the university faculty regarding conditions of graduation, the nature of degrees to be conferred, and make recommendations to the board of regents for earned degrees.

Within this context, the University Committee was surprised to learn that the institution has an administrative policy on the granting of degrees posthumously to deceased students. That policy, put into writing several years ago in an attempt to formalize past practice, has never been reviewed or discussed by the faculty. While it may be appropriate for the institution to have such a policy, the University Committee believes that the decision rests with the Faculty Senate, not with the administration.

Administrative Policy

The current policy delegates to the college dean of the deceased student the authority to recommend a posthumous degree. This authority includes recommendations for both posthumous undergraduate and professional degrees. No restrictions are placed on that authority, although the policy does list a number of guidelines that are intended “to assist in assessing the appropriateness of the degree conferral.” Those three guidelines are listed below (the policy has no requirement that the guidelines be followed):

1. The student should have been within her/his final year of study.
2. The student should have achieved at least the minimum GPA required for the degree.
3. The student should have been within at least one term, assuming completion of any classes that were in progress at the time of death, of completing the requirements for at least one major and one degree.

The policy further provides that upon receiving a request from a dean that the Office of the Registrar will grant the degree and order the diploma. The posthumous diploma does not reflect the special nature of the degree, although a notation is made on the transcript to indicate that the degree was awarded posthumously.

University Committee Recommendation

The University Committee presents this information to the senate for discussion and determination of whether the institution should continue the practice of awarding posthumous degrees, and if so under what faculty policy.