INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate certificate programs at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire (UW-Eau Claire) serve the needs of both degree-seeking and non-degree seeking populations.

For those not seeking a degree, these programs offer an opportunity for an individual to earn college credit and advance towards a credential that certifies a significant level of achievement within a prescribed array of courses. As the rate of change in the workplace accelerates, more people find it necessary to engage in continuous learning to meet the challenges of new duties and responsibilities or career changes. Often the need is for in-depth study that goes beyond what is generally provided in non-credit professional development activities. Credit-bearing certificate programs are of particular value since the program is verified by a university transcript.

For degree-seeking students, a certificate program can be pursued to demonstrate expertise in a particular academic field. Successful completion of a certificate program may serve to satisfy graduation requirements for a second program of study or to add credentials beyond any other required programs.

STANDARDS

1. The development and continuation of undergraduate certificate programs will be based on student and university needs and interests.

2. The approval process for a program will maintain high academic standards.

3. The purpose of a certificate program must be clearly outlined in any proposal and must demonstrate the benefits of the certificate and its alignment with the mission of the University.

4. Certificates may be earned by degree-seeking students or by a specified audience from the community not pursuing a university degree. Guidelines and standards will be identical for both populations.

5. Certificate programs include a minimum of 12 credits for undergraduate certificates and a maximum of 18 credits. A 2.00 GPA is the university minimum requirement for completion of undergraduate certificate programs.
6. At least 25 percent of the credits applied to the certificate program requirements must be taken in residence. (Credits earned through the National Student Exchange Program, the Health Care Practicum, internships, study abroad opportunities, and UW-Eau Claire internet courses are counted as resident credit.)

7. Departments/programs, or colleges proposing certificate programs have the right to specify (a) admission requirements for entry into a certificate program, (b) minimum GPA requirements for courses included in the program, (c) GPA requirements for certificate completion above the university minimum, and (d) applicability of S/U option, if any.

8. Where appropriate, certificate programs should meet industry/professional society/accreditation standards.

PROCEDURES

1. Undergraduate certificate program proposals should originate at the department/program level; all affected departments/programs must endorse proposals. Each proposal will include the following:

   a. Context for the certificate program (any predecessor programs, relationship to existing programs, alignment with university mission);

   b. Rationale explaining need for the program (e.g. target audience(s), evidence of long-term need, anticipated enrollment);

   c. Statement of benefits to students, the department(s)/program(s), college(s), and university;

   d. Description of the academic component including:

      i. Learning goals and outcomes for students;

      ii. Specification of any program admission requirements, minimum GPA requirements for courses, GPA requirements for certificate completion above the university minimum, applicability of the S/U option;

      iii. Course array including specification of new, required and elective courses. If electives are allowed within the certificate program, an explanation of the proposed electives in light of the need for program cohesion should be included.

   e. Description of the administration, staffing and budgeting for the program, including:
i. Faculty/staff participating in the certificate program;

ii. Proposed frequency of offering for the courses included in the certificate program;

iii. Proposed arrangements for ongoing advising for students in the certificate program;

iv. Anticipated need for student support services for students enrolled in the certificate program;

v. Identification of an administrative home for certificate programs involving more than one academic department/program;

vi. Funding needs to initiate and maintain the certificate program, including source(s) of funding and any needed resource reallocation;

vii. Impact on existing courses and programs.

2. Each proposed certificate program and the courses included in it must gain the approval of all affected departments/programs and the appropriate college curriculum committee(s). The proposed program will then be forwarded to the Academic Policies Committee of the University Senate for approval. The certificate will be enacted following approval by this committee.

3. Certificate programs will be reviewed as part of the program review process for academic departments/programs; interdisciplinary certificate programs will be reviewed in conjunction with the administrative home’s program review process. College curriculum committees will have the authority to suspend or reinstate certificate programs.