DATE: October 6, 2011
TO: College Administrators for Undergraduate and Graduate Education
FROM: Jean Vasilatos-Younken
SUBJECT: Changes to Postbaccalaureate/Graduate Certificate Administrative Policies and Processes

In order to assure that students who complete postbaccalaureate and graduate (PB/G) certificates receive appropriate documentation of that achievement on their official institutional record (i.e., transcript), the Graduate School will be implementing a number of changes this academic year to administrative policies and processes for PB/G certificate programs. Existing Graduate Council policies, procedures, and guidelines for postbaccalaureate credit certificates (which include graduate certificates) can be reviewed at http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/policies/faculty/statement.html. These require that each college/school in the University have a systematic proposal development, review, and approval process for postbaccalaureate credit certificate programs that should include consultation regarding the proposed certificate offering with other relevant units. Upon approval of a proposed PB/G credit certificate program by the college/school dean or designee, the Graduate School reviews the certificate for compliance with Graduate Council guidelines (for a brief summary of these guidelines, see Appendix I below) and approval of the Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin (Bulletin) description.

To date, not all PB/G certificate programs being offered across the University have been reviewed and approved by the college/school and/or Graduate School, and many are not entered into the eISIS-based eCert system. Entry of certificate information into eCert, including a certificate program code and title, together with manual creation of an ISIS student certificate record via ISIS screen ARUSBD, allows for a transcript notation when completion of the PB/G certificate is confirmed by the program on ARUSBD. Inconsistent compliance with these processes impacts completeness of the Bulletin listing for PB/G certificate programs, as well as central archiving, transcript notations, enrollment records, etc., and compromises the integrity of this institutional credential.

Over the past two years, changes to the eCert system have been made through a collaborative effort by the Graduate School, University Registrar, AIS, Outreach, and other offices. These include programming changes to standardize certificate information entered into eCert; creation of system controls to reflect Graduate Council guidelines; addition of an eCert college approval and Graduate School review path; and development of online templates for Bulletin certificate copy. In addition, an online application for all PB/G certificate programs entered into eCert has been created that offers optional features for uploading application materials, soliciting references, and customizing program-specific questions, similar to those in the graduate degree application. The online PB/G certificate application will be available via the Graduate School Admissions and Information Portal (http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/portal/), and will require payment of a $65 certificate application fee.
Once an application is submitted, the PB/G certificate application record will be available for programs to review in GRADS and enter admission decisions. For certificate applicants accepted into the PB/G certificate program in GRADS, an ARUSBD record will be created automatically in ISIS. Completion of the PB/G certificate will still need to be manually confirmed by the program for each student via ISIS screen ARUSBD.

The following summarizes new Graduate School Administrative Policies related to postbaccalaureate and graduate certificates for the University:

1. All PB/G certificate offerings MUST be entered into eCert (accessed via eISIS). This will require appropriate program personnel to obtain authorization and access to eCert, and training for new users (see related information below.)

2. All applicants to PB/G certificate programs must be directed to apply by means of the online PB/G certificate application, and certificate program website information must direct applicants to the Graduate School Admissions and Information Portal (http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/portal/) to access the application.

3. All admission decisions for individuals who have applied to a PB/G certificate program using the PB/G certificate application must be entered into the GRADS Certificate System. This will require appropriate program personnel to obtain authorization and access to the GRADS Certificate System, and training for new users (see related information below.)

(Important Note - Graduate program staff who currently have access to the graduate degree system in GRADS will require additional authorization for the GRADS Certificate System. Such authorized access is available only at a college-wide level, and not at a certificate program-specific level).

4. All programs must enter certificate completion by students in ARUSBD. This will require appropriate program personnel to obtain authorization and access to ISIS screen ARUSBD, and training for new users (see related information below.)

Support efforts for these new policies include the following:

1. Security paths are established for all needed systems as follows (authorization requests should be submitted via the college Access and Security Representative [ASR] to Chris Brown, Director of Network Operations, The Graduate School, cab4@psu.edu, 814-865-9899):
   - Request for eCert access.
   - Request for GRADS Certificate System access (level 2 for staff management; level 3 for academic admissions review). Request form is available at https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/cosign/grads/pdf/eCertAccessForm.pdf.
   - Request for ISIS screen ARUSBD access.
   - Request for authorized college approver for PB/G certificates in eCert (Note - the college administrator for graduate education at each graduate center has been granted authorization at this time).
2. Upcoming training sessions will be available for program personnel related to the following required systems (access the necessary registration form online at http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/gradappdemo/):

- eCert
- ARUSBD
- GRADS Certificate System

It is important that representatives of each certificate program attend a training session. We recommend that program representation include the person with academic oversight for the certificate program, and at least one certificate program staff member, preferably the staff member who will be entering admission decisions into the GRADS Certificate System.

Training sessions are scheduled for:

- Thursday, October 27, 2011, 9:30–11:30 AM, 102 Kern, University Park
- Wednesday, November 2, 2011, 1:30–3:30 PM, 102 Kern, University Park
- Thursday, November 3, 2011, 2:00–4:00 PM, 102 Kern, University Park
- Tuesday, November 8, 2011, 1:30–4:00 PM, Lecture Room B, 5th Floor, Hershey campus

A summary of the sequential steps required for postbaccalaureate/graduate certificate programs moving forward, and relevant dates are as follows:

1. Obtain authorization for access to eCert, ARUSBD, and GRADS Certificate System (via college ASR).

2. Receive training for eCert, ARUSBD, and GRADS Certificate System (training sessions available beginning October 27, 2011).

3. Enter certificate information into eCert.

4. Once the certificate is approved in eCert and released, set preferences for options and customizable features of PB/G certificate application in GRADS.

   Note - Automatic notification will be sent via e-mail once a certificate entered into eCert has been approved and released. Once released, the certificate will be available within the GRADS Certificate System and the online PB/G Certificate application on the first Monday following the release date.

5. Update certificate program web information to direct applicants to the Graduate School Admissions and Information Portal (http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/portal/) to access the online certificate application (available beginning December 1, 2011).

6. For students previously admitted into certificate programs not entered into eCert/ARUSBD (i.e., “desk-drawer programs”), programs will have a “grace period” until March 1, 2012, to retroactively enter certificate into eCert and manually create ARUSBD student records.
Once grace period ends, manual access to create ARUSBD record will be blocked and, effective March 2, 2012, the only means to create a new student ARUSBD certificate record will be via the certificate application.

Please share this information broadly within your college and ask that relevant personnel begin the process to gain authorization, access, and training for the necessary systems as soon as possible. Authorization for access may take several weeks to process. Most importantly, please emphasize the importance of strict compliance with these policies moving forward, including submission of existing PB/G certificates into eCert and creation of student certificate records in ISIS screen ARUSBD, in cases where these may not have been done previously.

For questions related to eCert/ISIS/GRADS Certificate System access and authorization, or training sessions, contact Chris Brown, Director of Network Operations, The Graduate School (cab4@psu.edu; 814-865-9899).

For questions related to GRADS Certificate System and ISIS Screen ARUSBD, contact Erika Bowser, Project Manager, The Graduate School (elb17@psu.edu; 814-865-3998).

For questions related to postbaccalaureate/graduate certificate policies and guidelines, or submission of certificate information in eCert, contact Elizabeth Price, Executive Director of Graduate Education Administration, The Graduate School (erc2@psu.edu; 814-865-2516).

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    Erika Bowser
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Appendix I. Summary of Graduate Council Postbaccalaureate/Graduate Certificate Guidelines (http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/policies/faculty/statement.html)*:

1. All courses in a PB/G certificate must be at or above the 400 level.
2. If a certificate includes at least one graduate course (e.g., 500-, 800-level), it must be designated as “Postbaccalaureate,” and all courses in the certificate must be at least 400-level.
3. To be designated a “Graduate” certificate (a special category of postbaccalaureate certificate), at least 50% of the course credits must be at the graduate (500, 800) level.
4. If at least one course in the certificate is below the 400-level, the certificate must be designated as “Undergraduate.”
5. The same certificate program cannot be designated and offered as both an undergraduate and a PB/G certificate.
6. Applicants to a PB/G certificate who are not already enrolled at Penn State (i.e., as graduate degree or non-degree students) must be admitted as non-degree graduate students.

*Please refer to indicated URL for detailed guidelines.