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*Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
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University of California
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June 13, 2019

**JANET NAPOLITANO, PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

Re: Policy on Awarding Degrees Posthumously

Dear Janet,

At its April 10, 2019 meeting, the Assembly of the Academic Senate, on the recommendation of the Academic Council, unanimously endorsed a proposed systemwide policy for awarding undergraduate and graduate degrees to students who pass away close to the completion of the degree. The policy was proposed by the University Committee on Educational Policy. In accordance with Regents Bylaw 40.1, the Academic Senate recommends the Board of Regents adopt the proposal as part of Regents policy.

First drafted as a set of guidelines for campuses, the proposal was rewritten at the request of Academic Council requested to be an integrated systemwide policy. The result reflects collaboration with CCGA to include graduate as well as baccalaureate degrees. To compose the policy, UCEP and CCGA collected and reviewed campus policies to develop a shared statement of priorities and processes. UCEP found that requirements for awarding posthumous degrees vary across campuses and the University should have a consistent systemwide policy, given that students receive University of California degrees, not campus degrees.

Overall, the focus of this policy is to provide common definitions, parameters, and process guidelines to inform what are unusual and often tragic circumstances, while also allowing for some exercise of judgement given specific circumstances. These degrees and certificates acknowledge the established and potential achievements of UC students. To that end, this policy provides criteria and procedures to campus leadership while encouraging generosity. It can be a significant consolation for friends and families of a deceased student to receive formal recognition of the student's pathway to degree completion.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Rob C May".

Robert C. May, Chair
Academic Council

Encl:

cc: Provost Brown
Academic Council
Senate Directors



**PROPOSED SYSTEMWIDE POLICY
FOR THE
AWARDING OF POSTHUMOUS BACCALAUREATE & GRADUATE DEGREES
December 2018**

UCEP recommends the following systemwide policy to regulate the posthumous awarding of baccalaureate and graduate degrees. For families of a deceased student, it may be a significant consolation that the student's near completion of a degree is formally recognized. Students who fall too far short of the criteria to merit an exception, should receive a "Certificate of Attendance" that details the student's progress toward the degree.

Policy on the Posthumous Awarding Of Degrees And Certificates Of Attendance

Purpose

The University of California seeks to extend sympathy and compassion to the families of students who pass away near the completion of their degrees and to recognize the academic achievement of students who would have fulfilled the requirements of the degree. These actions must be balanced with attention to academic and institutional integrity.

Criteria

Normally, the posthumous conferral of the degree is granted to students currently enrolled or on leave at the time of death. The following specify a common threshold to be eligible for a posthumous conferral of a degree as what is termed near completion of a degree:

- For a baccalaureate degree, the deceased student should have senior-level standing and have at least a 2.0 GPA.
- For a doctoral degree, the deceased student should have advanced to candidacy and have demonstrated a sufficiently high level of scholarly achievement that, in the opinion of their advisor and one other member of their doctoral committee, they were more likely than not to have successfully completed their doctorate.
- For a master's degree, the deceased student should either have completed a draft of the master's thesis (or a substantial portion thereof) or, for programs that do not require a thesis, have completed all the final term of their coursework for the degree.

A near completion of degree, as defined above, is a standard level for eligibility for posthumous conferral of a degree; however, circumstances are not predictable or simple, and thus benefitting from discretion through an appeal process. For students who pass away before achieving near completion of the degree (as defined above), the home campus may: consider an exception to confer the degree posthumously or offer a Certificate of Attendance detailing the student's progress toward the degree.

Appeals for exceptions for students who narrowly fail to reach these thresholds will be considered by the local senate council responsible for relevant educational policy. Appeals for exceptions can be made by anyone.

Procedure

The process for identifying and considering candidates for the posthumous conferring of undergraduate degrees will vary from campus to campus, but will include the following features:

1. A formal request for the awarding of the degree may be initiated by any of the following: a family member, a faculty member, a dean, or a fellow student. If the request is not made by a family member, the family should be contacted, if possible, and consulted about the possible award.
2. The decision to award the degree should not be based solely on whether the student meets the criteria. A group (such as the Executive Committee of the student's school) or individual (such as the Dean of the student's school) must be tasked with assessing each case on its merits. Degrees should not be awarded to students whose actions at the time of their death would have led to expulsion from the university or similar disciplinary action. Similarly, students who died in notably heroic circumstances should be considered potentially eligible for the degree even if they do not meet all the criteria.
3. Degrees awarded posthumously will be noted on the commencement program. The student's diploma or certificate will be released or mailed to the person legally authorized to manage the deceased student's affairs. The posthumous nature of the award will be indicated on the diploma and in the student's official transcript. Any fees associated with the administration of the degree or certificate of attendance shall be waived.