

FACULTY MEETING
March 5, 2010

January Degree Conferral

Proposal:

The Registrar's Office requests consideration of a change in practice that would allow us to confer the degree, without ceremony, in January for those students who have met all requirements for the degree. We would not change the students' class year, and these candidates would still be invited to participate in the May Commencement as usual. Not all January completers actually participate in Commencement, but some number of students do elect to return to campus for the formal ceremony.

Rationale:

Every year approximately 20-30 students complete their degree requirements in January, following collection of the fall term grades. In some cases, students have been reclassified from a prior class year; in other cases, the students have accelerated and are completing early; and in some cases a leave of absence or a spring term admissions has moved the student off the more routine pattern. Our current practice is to fold the names of these degree candidates in with the May candidates and to award the actual degree in May.

This practice creates problems for the January completers, since they often are attempting to take jobs or enter graduate programs as soon as possible. The Office of the Registrar must complete certification letters for these students, indicating completion of requirements and assuring the recipient that the student will be awarded the diploma in five months time. In some (few) instances, this more standard letter is insufficient, and we must write or call on the student's behalf to explain in more detail. The transcript obviously does not reflect the degree conferral until late in May of that same year. Students are also no longer on campus during the spring term and are not part of the general campus drive toward Commencement. We anticipate that the numbers of January candidates may increase in coming years, given that we have doubled the number of transfer students enrolling and are seeing higher numbers of leaves each term. Implementing this change would assist students with their transitions to jobs and graduate schools and does not create more work for the Registrar's Office.

Annual Timeline:

- September – develop the January roster of candidates, including students enrolled in Skidmore course work for the fall, students studying away from campus during the fall term, and those who are completing in absentia.
- October – prepare a motion for action by the Board of Trustees (Academic Affairs Committee) authorizing the President to confer the degrees (using language currently used for the May Board meeting)
- December – create the list of candidates and potential honors recipients for review by CAS and presentation to the Faculty for a vote at the December Faculty Meeting
- January – process grades and determine the names of the final candidates and final honors recipients; post completions to the student system; prepare diplomas

- February – mail diplomas (dated January 31, YYYY) as close to February 1st as is feasible
- May –include the graduates in the May Commencement Bulletin (perhaps with a notation re: the completion date)

Process:

- Consideration by CAS
- Consideration by CEPP
- Consideration by VPAA Staff
- Consideration by President's Cabinet
- Consideration by IPPC
- Consideration by Faculty (March faculty meeting; formal vote not required)
- Action by Board (May meeting)
- Implementation – September 2010

March 4, 2010