MEMORANDUM

September 3, 2013

TO: Ms. Cynthia M. Sanchez
FROM: Patti Ohlendorf
RE: Faculty Council Legislation: D 10330 – 10331, Proposed Change to the General Information Catalog Language on Multiple Degrees Policy

Our office has reviewed Faculty Council Legislation D 10330 – 10331, the Proposed Change to the General Information Catalog Language on Multiple Degrees Policy. The proposed modification, as recommended by the Educational Policy Committee and approved by the Faculty Council, removes certain restrictions and requirements for the award of more than one degree to a student.

Our office agrees with the rationale presented by the Educational Policy Committee and finds that the proposed wording is in order for approval.

Thank you.

PCO/bh

cc: Dr. Charles A. Roecke
    Dr. Dean Neikirk
    Ms. Debbie Roberts
DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

PROPOSED CHANGE TO GENERAL INFORMATION CATALOG LANGUAGE ON MULTIPLE DEGREES POLICY AS APPROVED BY THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE

On behalf of the Educational Policy Committee, Dr. Mary Rose (committee chair, sociology) submitted the following proposal recommending changes to the language in the General Information catalog (GIC) on the multiple degrees policy. The secretary has classified this proposal as legislation of general interest. On May 2, 2013, the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) approved the proposal.¹

The Faculty Council will act on the proposal at its meeting on May 6, 2013. Final approval resides with UT System with formal notification to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

¹ On May 2, 2013, the document was updated to reflect the recommendation for approval by the Educational Policy Committee.

Posted on the Faculty Council website (http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/) on April 23, 2013.
PROPOSED CHANGE TO GENERAL INFORMATION CATALOG LANGUAGE ON MULTIPLE DEGREES POLICY AS APPROVED BY THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE

Background and Policy Rationale
This legislation emerged from the Enrollment Management Policy Implementation Team, a committee appointed by Senior Vice Provost David Laude and chaired by Vice Provost and Registrar Shelby Stanfield. The committee decided that UT’s policy on “Multiple Degrees” should be adjusted.

Current General Information (GIC) policy requires that students who wish to earn multiple degrees (e.g., a BA and a BS) take an additional twenty-four semester credit hours over that required for the bachelor’s degree that demands the higher number of credit hours. These hours are not specifically needed to meet the major requirements of either degree (i.e., such as electives). The additional twenty-four hours are taken solely to satisfy this particular rule. These excess credit hours extend the time to graduation for these students. The Graduation Task Force that analyzed four-year graduation rates found that the odds of graduating in four years were much lower for students pursuing dual degrees (even lower than those pursuing more than one major). The University has seen an increasing trend in students pursuing multiple degrees. The implementation team has therefore judged that the elimination of the excess hours is highly likely to have a positive effect on increasing four-year graduation rates.

A significant question that the Enrollment Management Policy Implementation Team investigated is why this rule exists. The committee has been unable to locate a rationale. After checking with the registrar’s office, the provost’s office, and the Office of Legal Affairs, the team found no statutory requirement for this policy (e.g., from the Higher Education Coordinating Board). The first time this policy appeared was in the early 1980’s in the catalog for the Business School. Once the University moved toward having a common GIC for the University, what had previously been a business school rule became a University-wide rule. It is worth noting that the rule was adopted at a time when the business school did not have restricted enrollment, as it does now. It is conceivable that this rule was adopted as a means of deterring people from declaring business as a second degree when such people may not have been fully committed to this course of study. If that was its purpose, then having restrictions on enrollments in that college now meets that aim. But, as noted, since there is no available and clear rationale for the rule, we cannot know the original reason for adoption. Because the policy lacks a clear rationale and because it does clearly delay progress to degree completion, the Enrollment Management Policy Implementation Team suggests the twenty-four hour requirement be eliminated, as indicated below. (The “for example” text struck through below was for purposes of editorial clarity.)

Multiple Degrees (language to remove appears with strikethrough)
http://catalog.utexas.edu/undergraduate/the-university/graduation/multiple-degrees/

MULTIPLE DEGREES

[No second bachelor’s degree will be conferred until the candidate has completed at least twenty-four semester hours in addition to those counted toward the bachelor’s degree that requires the higher number of hours of credit. The McCombs School of Business, the Cockrell School of Engineering, the College of Education, and the School of Nursing require the student to complete at least twenty-four hours in addition to those counted toward the first bachelor’s degree.

A student may not receive more than one degree with the same title.[* For example, he or she may not earn more than one Bachelor of Arts degree.]