

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM: 6.A.2

DATE: July 9, 2009

SUBJECT: Revision to Board Policy 2:17 – Awarding of Degrees, Graduation Dates and Catalog of Graduation

During the May AAC meeting, the Council discussed the awarding of academic degrees posthumously (see [AAC Agenda Item 6.E, May 2009](#)). A campus had a situation arise in which there was a desire to award a degree to a deceased student. While the Board has authorized campuses to confer degrees posthumously, it was noted that there was no governing Board policy.

It was agreed that Board policies did cover the awarding of a degree to a student who died after completing all requirements for the degree but before the degree was conferred. While in a technical sense, this degree would be conferred posthumously, Board Policy 2:17 explicitly states that the Board authorizes campuses to confer degrees upon those students who have completed all requirements.

The issue that AAC addressed focused more narrowly on those cases where the campus wished to award a degree to a student who died before completing all of the requirements. Historically, this has been handled by the Board using procedures similar to those for honorary degrees. While an academic degree is being conferred, the requirements have not been completed so the institution’s recommendation has provided the justification for the request. These serve as the basis for the Board’s decision. Board staff agreed to draft a proposed revision to policy that will reflect this perspective.

After some consideration, it is proposed that this modification be incorporated into Board Policy 2:17, governing the awarding of degrees to those who complete established programmatic requirements. As was discussed during the May AAC meeting, this revision could also be added to Board Policy 2:18 which governs honorary degrees. As noted, these degrees are truly honorary since the candidates did not complete all of the requirements and the award is therefore being made as tribute to this individual.

(continued)

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Discussion and Recommendation.

The proposed addition to the policy states,

In rare occasions, the Board will authorize the awarding of a posthumous academic degree in recognition of meritorious but incomplete work that represents substantial progress toward degree completion. Most commonly this will be granted in those cases where the student was enrolled in good standing and in the final phases of degree completion at the time of death. However, since these are honorary awards, exceptions to this guideline may be made. For example, when the student's death occurred under extraordinary circumstances such as while participating in a university sponsored activity or while on military duty, it may be recommended that degrees be awarded to individuals with fewer credit hours completed. Exceptions may also be made for other mitigating circumstances such as those cases where chronic illness or some other intervening factor prevented enrollment.

The President will forward the institution's recommendation for Board consideration. The recommendation should address the deceased student's standing and provide adequate justification for the award.

Each institution shall establish a procedure for initiating and reviewing recommendations which will include at a minimum a review by the faculty and administrators with oversight of the deceased student's field of study.

Recommendations from the institution must be submitted to and acted upon by the Board of regents prior to the commencement at which the degree will be conferred.

Members of AAC should be prepared to discuss this recommendation.

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Policy Manual

SUBJECT: Awarding of Degrees, Graduation Dates, and Catalog of Graduation

NUMBER: 2:17

1. Awarding of Degrees

The Board approves the awarding of academic degrees after receiving the university president's recommendation on behalf of the university.

A. In recommending that the Board approve the award of a degree to an individual, the President certifies that the student has satisfied, or is expected to satisfy, the applicable degree requirements in Board Policy or in curricular requests approved by the Board.

1) Board approval is contingent upon the student's completion of all of the degree requirements. A degree may be awarded only after the student has completed the degree requirements.

2) Approval of institutional recommendations by the Board shall not be construed to waive any degree requirement for an individual student.

B. Recommendations for awarding degrees shall be submitted to the Board through its Executive Director and shall appear on the agenda of a regularly scheduled Board meeting.

1) Universities are authorized to hold commencement exercises prior to Board approval of institutional recommendations.

2) The recommendations shall be submitted in a uniform format determined by the Board.

3) Recommendations shall be submitted to the Board through its Executive Director according to the following schedule:

a. Recommendations for May commencement exercises or graduation shall be provided to the Board at its regularly scheduled May meeting.

b. Recommendations for August commencement exercises or graduation shall be provided to the Board at its regularly scheduled August meeting.

c. Recommendations for December commencement exercises or graduation shall be provided to the Board at its regularly scheduled December meeting.

d. A list of the students who completed all requirements shall be provided to the Board Office at the beginning of the third week of September for students on the previous winter, spring and summer graduation lists.

4) The Board may authorize the Executive Director to approve additions, deletions, and corrections to lists of recommendations approved by the Board. Such additions, deletions, and corrections shall be reported to the Board at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

2. Awarding of Posthumous Degrees

A. In rare occasions, the Board will authorize the awarding of a posthumous academic degree in recognition of meritorious but incomplete work that represents substantial progress toward degree completion. Most commonly this will be granted in those cases where the student was enrolled in good standing and in the final phases of degree completion at the time of death. However, since these are honorary awards, exceptions to this guideline may be made. For example, when the student's death occurred under extraordinary circumstances such as while participating in a university sponsored activity or while on military duty, it may be recommended that degrees be awarded to individuals with fewer credit hours completed. Exceptions may also be made for other mitigating circumstances such as those cases where chronic illness or some other intervening factor prevented enrollment.

B. The President will forward the institution's recommendation for Board consideration. The recommendation should address the deceased student's standing and provide adequate justification for the award.

C. Each institution shall establish a procedure for initiating and reviewing recommendations which will include at a minimum a review by the faculty and administrators with oversight of the deceased student's field of study.

D. Recommendations from the institution must be submitted to and acted upon by the Board of Regents prior to the commencement at which the degree will be conferred.

2.3. Graduation Dates

- A. The official date of graduation for the term is the last date of the term. For the Fall and Spring terms, this date is the last date of final examinations. For the Summer term, it is the last date of the full summer term. This date of graduation will be recorded both on the academic transcript and on the diploma.
- B. Commencement ceremonies may be held prior to the official graduation date or after the official graduation date.
- C. A student's official date of graduation shall be the official date of graduation for the term in which the student successfully completes all requirements.
- D. The final graduation verification date for each term will be two days prior to the Clearinghouse certification date.
 - 1) The Vice President for Academic Affairs may make an exception to the final graduation verification date for student teachers who complete their student teaching experience on a date after the verification deadline.
 - 2) The Medical School is exempted from the final graduation verification date.
 - 3) Other than the exceptions noted above for student teachers and the Medical School, a student's date of graduation will not be backdated. If the student does not meet graduation requirements prior to the verification deadline, the student must apply for graduation in a future term.

34. Catalog of Graduation for Undergraduate Students

- A. The catalog of graduation begins with the summer term and ends with the subsequent spring term.
- B. Every student is required to have a catalog of graduation. New and transfer students are assigned the catalog in effect at the time of their initial enrollment at the university from which they are seeking a degree. Students may elect a catalog of graduation that is later than their initial catalog but may not elect a catalog of graduation that is earlier than their initial catalog.
- C. In order to receive a degree, a student must meet the program requirements listed in his/her catalog of graduation.

- D. Students who discontinue enrollment at any Regental university for more than two consecutive semesters are assigned the catalog in effect at the time of their re-enrollment as their catalog of graduation.
- E. Students are considered to be in continuous enrollment for purposes of the catalog of graduation so long as any break in enrollment at any Regental university is for two or fewer consecutive semesters (excluding summer) and students maintain their degree seeking status at the same Regental university.
- F. Students who change their degree seeking status from one Regental university to another Regental university are assigned the catalog of graduation that corresponds to the term they are admitted to their new degree granting university.

SOURCE: BOR November 1990; BOR September 1992; BOR June 1997; BOR August 2003; BOR, August 2004; [BOR August 2009](#).