

09 April 2013

TO Joseph Glover  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

FROM Maria Rogal  
Chair of the Academic Policy Council & Associate Professor

RE Academic Policy Council Recommendation for the Posthumous Degree Policy

In fall 2011 you asked the Academic Policy Council to review the university's policy on awarding posthumous degrees. This memo outlines our process of review and provides the recommendation of the Academic Policy Council for your review. Our process began with an analysis of other institutions' policies, including those of peer institutions, to better understand the range of practices that exist nationwide. We reviewed two proposals put forward by a group of administrators working on this question, Drs. Jen Day Shaw, Elaine Turner, Stephanie Hanson, and Angela Linder, who have direct experience with families of deceased students [10.22.11 and 09.12.12]. To obtain a sense of attitudes across the university, we sought feedback from the College Faculty Councils and received responses from CLAS, Education, Engineering, Fine Arts, IFAS, Medicine, and PHHP. Finally, to explore the viability of our recommendation, we sought input from the Registrar, Mr. Steve Pritz, to advise on the material document and its implementation. In arriving at our recommendation to you, our goal was to seek a solution that would provide a meaningful symbol to the families to reflect the achievements and legacy of the deceased student and, at the same time, uphold academic and institutional integrity.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Policy on Posthumous Recognition of UF Students**

The University of Florida seeks to provide meaningful ways to assist families of students who pass away by awarding an IN MEMORIAM DEGREE for any student regardless of their progress towards completion of their degree requirements, while maintaining the option of awarding a degree posthumously for students who were near completion of their degree program at the time of their death. A student who was close to completing their degree would potentially be able to receive both awards.

This two-pronged approach provides the surviving relatives with the opportunity to receive meaningful, positive reinforcement regarding the student's impact, engagement, and academic achievements at UF while upholding academic and institutional integrity.

The Posthumous Degree is a regular UF degree that is reported to the Board of Governors (BoG) but awarded posthumously.

The In Memoriam Degree will not be reported to the BoG. The document will look like a degree (see example attached) and be signed by the Provost and Dean of the deceased student's college. The In Memoriam Degree will be issued by the Office of the University Registrar (OUR).

To further acknowledge the deceased student's contribution, the student's department or college may choose to create a separate document such as a letter or card that may include comments regarding:

- the nature and significance of the student's scholarly endeavor, participation in student leadership and other extra and co-curricular activities,
- the esteem in which the individual was held by faculty members, fellow students, and other campus groups and organizations, and
- other personal qualities that might be considered suitable for inclusion.

This latter document is optional and separate from the In Memoriam Degree. It should originate in the deceased student's department.

Undergraduate, graduate, and professional students who were registered in a degree program at the time of their death are eligible for the In Memoriam Degree, without regard to the likelihood of completing the requirements for the degree program. The university may choose to make this award to other individuals (such as previously enrolled students) in special circumstances.

### **Conferring of In Memoriam Degrees**

The Dean's Office of the student's college consults with the student's degree program and the Dean of Students Office to review the student's academic record. The student's degree program has an opportunity to prepare comments recognizing the deceased student's contribution. This may be in the form of a letter or a card. It is submitted to the Dean's Office to be given to the family along with the diploma. The Dean's Office requests the OUR prepare an In Memoriam Degree diploma for the student's family. On completion, the OUR will release the diploma to the Dean's Office.

**Proposed In Memoriam Degree Language**

The University of Florida

has conferred on

[insert student's name]

The In Memoriam Degree

In recognition of accomplishments as a student at the University of Florida

In Witness Whereof, this diploma, duly signed, has been issued and the seal of the University affixed.

Issued by the Provost upon the recommendation of the Dean of the [insert college here]

At Gainesville, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

[signatures]

Provost [university seal]    Dean

**Conferring of Posthumous Degrees for Undergraduate Students**

The Dean's Office of the student's college consults with the student's degree program to review the student's academic record. If the student has completed at least 80% of the requirements for their degree program and the majority of the degree program faculty supports the awarding of the degree, the Dean's Office should request the approval of the posthumous degree according to the existing Posthumous Degree Policy, dated December 18, 2006.

**Conferring of Posthumous Degrees for Graduate and Professional Students**

The APC does not recommend changes to the awarding of Posthumous Degrees for students enrolled in graduate or professional programs at the University of Florida.

Attachment: In Memoriam Degree Prototype

cc:     Dr. Cheri Brodeur, Chair, UF Faculty Senate  
          members – APC

# The University of Florida

has conferred on

[insert student's name]

## The In Memoriam Degree

In recognition of accomplishments as a student at the University of Florida

In Witness Whereof, this diploma, duly signed, has been issued and the seal of the University affixed.  
Issued by the Probst upon the recommendation of the Dean of the [insert college name]

At Gainesville, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

[insert signatures]

Probst

[insert university seal]

Dean