

## **POLICY ON AWARDING POSTHUMOUS DEGREES**

### **Purpose**

California State University, Fresno extends sincere sympathy and condolences to families who have lost loved ones, who were pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree. The purpose of this policy is to recognize the academic achievement of students who have passed away while they were pursuing their degree. At the same time, these recognitions must also be balanced with careful attention to the academic and institutional integrity of our degree programs.

### **A. Guidelines for Awarding an Undergraduate Degree Posthumously**

The President, upon a recommendation of the faculty within the deceased student's major, the Dean of the school/college, and the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, may confer a posthumous Bachelor's degree upon a student, who at the time of death, has completed a substantial portion of the requirements for graduation. A "substantial portion" means, at the time of death, the student:

1. Was enrolled at the university;
2. Would have completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree in their chosen major during that semester;
3. Had a minimum 2.0 G.P.A.

For deceased students who may not have reached this level of completion of their academic work, department and school/college may also award a "Certificate of Achievement" to those students, as well other tributes based on the student's academic accomplishments to date. On rare occasions, exceptions may be made for special circumstances that merit awarding the degree.

### **Procedures for Awarding an Undergraduate Degree Posthumously**

Undergraduate degrees may be awarded posthumously if the above criteria are met and the degree would have been completed had it not been for the untimely occurrence of the death of the student. It assumes that all degree requirements could have been completed during the term in which the death occurred.

The following procedures apply to awarding of the posthumous undergraduate degree:

1. Upon learning of the death of a student, the Office of Evaluations will determine the extent to which the student meets the criteria for receipt of a posthumous degree as noted above.
2. The Office of Evaluations will notify the department chair and college/school Dean of the student's status. The department faculty can initiate a recommendation for awarding of the degree to the college/school Dean. The college/school Dean can make a recommendation to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs. If there is concurrence, the Provost would forward the recommendation to the University President, who will make the final decision.

3. If approved, the President would notify the Vice President for Student Affairs to make contact with the deceased student's family to notify them of the awarding of degree and to determine the manner in which the degree would be conferred. The Vice President for Student Affairs will also contact the Registrar's Office.
4. Student recognition for receipt of the posthumous degree would be made in the University Commencement program and at the college/school/department Convocation - if possible. At the request of the family – a private ceremony for conferral of the degree may be able to be arranged by the Vice President for Student Affairs for department faculty, family, and guests.
5. Upon awarding of the degree, the Registrar's Office will make the appropriate notation in the student's record.

#### **B. Guidelines for Awarding A Graduate Degree Posthumously**

As there has not been a policy for awarding posthumous degrees at the graduate level, this policy was created to ensure consistent criteria are applied to each case before a graduate degree is granted. A posthumous degree (MA/ MS/ MBA/ MBt/ MFA/ MPA/ MPH/ MSW/ Ed.S./ Ed.D./ DNP/ DPT) may be conferred on a student who:

1. Was currently enrolled or on leave at the time of their death;
2. Passed comprehensive examinations, and/or have completed a draft of their project/thesis/dissertation;
3. Be within 6 units of completing the degree; and
4. Must have a 3.0 G.P.A. or better on all courses listed on their Petition of Advancement to Candidacy.

For those who may not have reached these final stages of their academic work, departments are encouraged to consider alternative ways of providing memorial tributes based upon the student's completed work to date and professional contributions to the program (e.g., awarding a certificate of recognition). On rare occasions, exceptions may be made for special circumstances that merit awarding the degree.

#### **Procedures for Awarding a Graduate Degree Posthumously**

Graduate degrees may be awarded posthumously when a student is completing the final culminating requirements for their degree and would have been expected to complete the degree had it not been for the untimely occurrence of death. Under these conditions, it is assumed that all program requirements could have been completed during the semester/term when death occurred.

The following procedures apply for the posthumous awarding of graduate degrees:

1. Upon learning of the death of a graduate student, the department, college/school dean the graduate dean and the dean of student affairs should be notified.
2. In keeping with the above description of such awards, a department may request posthumous awarding of a graduate degree. The graduate consultative body for the program must support this request. The department's recommendation should be based

upon input from the student's culminating experience committee (thesis, project or comprehensive exam faculty). The culminating experience committee must meet and discuss the progress of the culminating experience to date, and determine if sufficient progress has been made to warrant the granting of the degree. The deceased student's graduate program faculty and graduate program coordinator must verify that the student could have satisfactorily completed all degree requirements and that the student was expected to meet scholarly and professional performance standards.

3. The formal departmental recommendation and request must have concurrence from the appropriate School or College Dean and be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies for approval. The Dean of Graduate Studies will forward a recommendation to the Provost and if the Provost is in concurrence, will forward the recommendation to the University President who will make the final decision. For joint doctoral programs, collaborating institutions must also concur with the recommendation to award the degree posthumously.
4. Student recognition for receipt of the posthumous degree would be made in the University Commencement program and at the college/school/department Convocation – if possible. At the request of the family – a private ceremony for conferral of the degree may be able to be arranged by the Dean of Graduate Studies for department faculty, family, and guests.
5. Upon approval by the University President, the department will be so informed and the Graduate Program Adviser/Coordinator should then proceed to submit any necessary clearance paperwork on behalf of the student including the Master's/Doctoral Degree Application for Graduation, submission of the Graduate Degree Clearance forms, and any other paperwork needed to clear the degree. The application fee for the granting of the degree may be waived. A diploma may be issued to the appropriate family member as determined by and requested by the department.
6. Notification of family members may be done through the department, the college/school dean and/ or the graduate dean as determined to be appropriate by the program faculty.
7. Copies of all correspondence and authorizations will be kept in the DGS student file.
8. DGS will notify the Registrar's Office that the student is deceased and that the degree is to be awarded posthumously. The registrar will make the appropriate notation in the student's record.

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Recommended by the Academic Senate  
Approved by the President

November 26, 2012  
December 6, 2012