



OVERVIEW: Information related to graduation, Commencement and diplomas

OFFICE/DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE: Office of Registration and Records

DATE UPDATED: July 2008

Graduation and officially receiving a degree are not automatic. Students must officially notify the Office of Registration and Records of their intentions to graduate. Do not assume that graduation is an automatic outcome of your having completed the minimum requirements for a degree; the College won't take steps to graduate you until you make the request, and there are several very good reasons for this. It would be a massive task for the College to be continually scanning the records of more than 9,000 students to ascertain when each will be ready to receive a degree. A student must be in good financial standing with the College. If an account balance exists, the diploma will be released only when the outstanding financial obligation has been completely satisfied. The same holds true of transcript release privileges. Official transcripts will not be released for any student unless they have fulfilled all outstanding financial obligation(s) to the College.

Once the student has graduated with a baccalaureate degree, the undergraduate record is closed. Therefore, a student cannot decide at some later date to add a minor or any other program to it, or to improve the GPA by repeating a course, or to add a teacher certification program to it. Also, once the degree is posted, a student is ineligible for most any kind of financial aid that is offered for undergraduates. If a student decides that s/he wants to take additional undergraduate courses once the baccalaureate degree has been posted, s/he will be required to pay graduate tuition rates for these undergraduate courses. Students must be very sure about when their degree is to be awarded **to prevent any future problems.**

Starting the Process

Application for Graduation. Completing an undergraduate or graduate Application for Graduation, starts the graduation process. *Applications for Graduation* are available in the Office of Registration and Records.

All *Applications for Graduation* must be submitted to the Office of Registration and Records no later than mid-term of the semester in which the student wishes to graduate.

The application asks the student to list the way they wish their name to appear on the diploma, the degree type, the major(s), minor(s), track/concentration area(s), in which term the degree will be completed, if they plan to attend the commencement ceremony, the address for diploma mailing, and a telephone number where they can be reached.

Completing an Application for Graduation with the Office of Registration and Records is the first step in the graduation process and sets in motion other related processes involving the Commencement Office. The application alerts the Office of Registration and Records of your plans to graduate and initiates a review of your academic record. All students are notified of their status. In the event that the review of your records is unfavorable, you and your major department will be provided a detailed list of the problems. If you and your advisor have met regularly to discuss your degree progress, your chances of receiving one of these fairly unpopular letters will be minimized.

Graduation. Degrees are awarded and students are officially graduated in December, January, May and August. It is important not to confuse “graduation” with “commencement.” The College awards the degree when the Office of Registration and Records has determined that all requirements have been successfully completed and notes that fact on the official college transcript. Only then has the student graduated.

Commencement. It is important to note that participation in the commencement ceremony does *not necessarily constitute graduation*. Commencement is the public celebration of that accomplishment, but it is a ceremony, not the actual graduation itself. While degrees are awarded in December, January, May and August, the College holds only one commencement ceremony each year in May. December graduates of the previous year, January graduates of the current year, and May/August candidates for the current year are eligible to participate in the commencement ceremony in May. Most undergraduates complete their degree requirements for May. If not, some are able to finish them over the succeeding summer session and graduate in August. Similarly, students who are unable to finish requirements for December may be able to complete them during the succeeding winter session and graduate in January. A nominal Commencement fee is charged to all students within one year of scheduled graduation. This fee is mandatory and is not contingent on student participation in Commencement ceremonies.

Diplomas. The diploma isn't the only source of legal proof that the student has completed a degree. As soon as final grades have been posted and a final review of the student's records has been completed to ensure that all requirements have been met, the Office of Registration and Records will place that notation on the official transcript as the real proof of the completion of the degree. It is important to understand that an employer or graduate school will require an **official transcript** as the proof of degree completion, not the diploma. The official transcript will be ready as soon as the Office of Registration and Records can complete the final reviews and post the degrees.

The diploma will not arrive at the address requested on the *Application for Graduation* until several weeks after the degree has been posted on the transcript. It is important to remember that a request for an address change on the College records *will not* affect the diploma address. **If the diploma address needs to be changed, the student must request it specifically.**

Confirming the Award of the Degree. Students should check to make certain that their final undergraduate transcript shows the notation of their degree award and that their diploma arrives. Occasionally, students walk through the Commencement ceremony and then, “forget” about

outstanding requirements. They discover years later that they do not actually have the degree because they did not complete all the degree requirements.

Questions?

For questions regarding specifics on the Commencement ceremony, contact the Commencement Office at (585) 395-5775.

For questions regarding specifics on transcripts, applications, and diplomas contact the Office of Registration and Records at (585) 395-2531.

For questions regarding progress towards degree completion, undergraduate students should consult their DARS report and contact their department and advisor to make certain requirements will be met on time.
