Recommendations on Stackable Certificates

What are stackable certificates?

The idea of stackable certificates is to allow non-degree seeking students to "stack" certificates they complete and apply those credits toward master's degree requirements. This would allow people to earn professionally relevant stand-alone credentials that would enable and perhaps encourage them to continue their studies toward a master's degree. Stacking certificates is perhaps a more feasible and attractive option for working professionals to earn a master's degree.

General guidelines for stackable certificates.

1. The University shall set minimum standards for creating stackable certificate programs; however individual programs may impose additional requirements.

   a) All coursework used to satisfy a particular certificate's requirements must be completed within a 6-year period with a grade of "C" or higher.
   b) Students must earn a grade point average of at least 3.00 in courses used to satisfy certificate requirements.
   c) All courses must be graduate level. Upper-division undergraduate courses may not be used to satisfy graduate certificate requirements.
   d) Certificate course work completed by any student 6 or more years before completing a degree program will not automatically be counted toward the requirements of the degree.

2. Stackable graduate certificates should be available to non-degree seeking students. However, in designing a stackable program, Graduate Studies Committees (GSCs) have the authority to allow degree seeking students to earn the proposed certificates.

3. Stackable graduate certificates involve courses offered within a single area of study.

4. Each stackable certificate should require completion of 9-15 hours of graduate-level coursework that has been approved by the program's GSC.

5. Stackable certificate programs should involve more than one certificate.

6. Each stackable certificate offered should be aligned to meet identified labor market demands.

7. The current university's maximum number of allowable transfer credits for certificates shall be adhered to by each stackable certificate.

8. No single certificate course should count more than once towards the degree requirements.

9. In the case of degree seeking students who wish to earn a stackable certificate, courses included in the major or supporting areas of work for the degree may be counted toward completion of a stackable graduate certificate.

10. The exception to the number of credit hours a non-degree seeking student can apply to the degree should be available only to students who have completed an approved stackable certificate program, after they have been formally admitted to the degree program.

11. Students completing stackable certificate requirements will receive recognition of their accomplishment on the university transcript.

12. Each graduate certificate program shall be reapproved every five (5) years, along with associated graduate degrees.