



**BOARD OF REGENTS**

SUMMARY OF ITEM FOR ACTION,  
INFORMATION, OR DISCUSSION

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**TOPIC:** Amendments: Policy on the Award of Posthumous Degrees (III-7.30)

**COMMITTEE:** Education Policy and Student Life

**DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING:** May 12, 2015

**SUMMARY:** The USM's Policy on the Award of Posthumous Degrees recognizes that its degree-granting institutions may seek to extend sympathy and compassion to families of deceased students by recognizing the academic achievement of these students who were likely to have fulfilled the requirements of the degree. Out of concern that the current policy is too restrictive, the vice presidents for student affairs proposed amendments. The provosts and vice presidents for student affairs further vetted and revised proposed language until coming to agreement on the attached amendments. All changes are highlighted in the attachment, but the amendments mainly concern:

- Completion requirements (amount of credits; where credits were completed) and
- The establishment of a posthumous certificate

The Council of University System Presidents and Council of University System Faculty reviewed and approved the proposed amendments. System staff has also determined that universities across the country have a variety of guidelines, and these suggested changes do not differ from the policies of many universities.

**ALTERNATIVE(S):** The Regents may not approve the suggested amendments or may request additional information.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

**CHANCELLOR'S RECOMMENDATION:** That the Committee on Education Policy and Student Life recommend that the Board of Regents approve the amendments to the USM Policy on the Award of Posthumous Degrees (III-7.30).

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COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: DATE: May 12, 2015

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BOARD ACTION: DATE:

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SUBMITTED BY: Joann A. Boughman 301-445-1992 jboughman@usmd.edu

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# UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND

## III-7.30 – POLICY ON THE AWARDING OF POSTHUMOUS DEGREES

(Approved by the Board of Regents, December 1, 2006; Amended June 2015)

### I. Purpose

The University System of Maryland recognizes that its degree-granting institutions may seek to extend sympathy and compassion to families of deceased students near completion of their degrees and to recognize the academic achievement of these students who have made significant progress toward the requirements of the degree. It is critical, however, that these actions are balanced appropriately with attention to academic and institutional integrity.

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### II. Policy

No institution in the USM is required to award posthumous degrees. Those that do, however, will make decisions regarding such awards on a case-by-case basis using the following criteria.

#### A. For the Posthumous Baccalaureate Degree

At the time of death, the student was enrolled or was expected to enroll in courses that would have completed at least 75% (i.e., 90 of 120 hours) of required credits toward the degree, at least 30 of which were taken at the degree-granting institution, and in all likelihood the student would have passed the courses with an acceptable grade and fulfilled requirements of the degree.

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#### B. For the Posthumous Graduate Degree

1. For graduate degrees not requiring a thesis or dissertation, at the time of death, the student had completed 75% of the required credit hours toward degree requirements, and it is likely that the student would have passed present or future courses with an acceptable grade and would likely have fulfilled or made progress towards fulfillment of the requirements of the degree.

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2. For graduate degrees requiring a thesis or dissertation, the student was near completion of the thesis or dissertation. The student's committee has reviewed the materials being prepared for defense and has found the work to be worthy of the degree. These include graduate degrees such as the master of fine arts (MFA) or the doctor of musical arts (DMA) requiring a thesis or dissertation that may include artistic, performance, and design components.

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#### C. Posthumous Certificate

In the event that the student does not meet the degree requirements described above, a

posthumous certificate can be given. The posthumous certificate is prepared at the request of the family and has no minimum credit completion requirements.

In all instances, the institution shall take into account whether the student has engaged in serious criminal activity or misconduct.

III. Procedure.

A formal request for a posthumous degree may be initiated by any of the following: a family member, the student's academic dean or department, or the chair of the student's graduate committee. If the request is not made by a family member, the family should be contacted and found to be receptive of the possible award.

The student's academic department and appropriate student academic services offices certify that the student had made significant progress toward the degree as defined in Section II above.

The dean or division head responsible for the student's academic department or the dean of the graduate school in the case of a graduate student shall forward a recommendation to the provost/vice president for academic affairs. The provost has final approval in awarding the posthumous degree.

Upon approval, the office of registration and records will record the award of the degree on the student's transcript. The appropriate office will send a diploma to the student's family and will invite the family to send a representative to participate in the commencement ceremony on behalf of the deceased student. The graduation application fee, if any, will be waived, and the student's name will be listed in the appropriate commencement ceremony program.

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