Policy Recommendations for Graduate Certificates

R. Anderson, M. Levin & A. Van Dyke

April 8, 2002

Our goal is to develop a set of proposed policies and processes given the constraints of established policy by virtue of the existing certificate programs at UIS, IBHE’s requirements for approval, or lack thereof, and the wisdom of pre-existing documents from other educational organizations. After a review of a draft outline for proposals for graduate certificates (Berman, 12/3/01, UIS), the existing Graduate Certificate Programs on the UIS campus, the UIUC Graduate College’s Professional Development Sequences, the Council of Graduate Schools guidelines for Policies and Procedures for Graduate Certificate Programs and IBHE’s IPEDS’ definition of Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, we propose the recommendations, with respect to policies and procedures, given below.

IBHE has defined the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate as “an award that requires completion of an organized program of study requiring 18 semester credit hours beyond the bachelor’s and is designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree but do not meet the requirements of academic degrees carrying the title of ‘master.’” A certificate program of 18 semester credit hours requires IBHE’s approval.

A document titled Certificate Issues, dated March 12, 2002, posed four questions for discussion regarding certificate programs and the policies and processes that would govern them. Given the IBHE definition, noted above and recognizing that a certificate program should probably have a specified minimum number of semester hours to constitute a specialization, the subcommittee responds to the questions and recommends the following:

1. The lower limit should be 12 semester credit hours and that the upper limit should not exceed one half the credit hours required for a master’s (see page G-4, Council of Graduate Schools policies).

Departments wishing to establish certificate programs should recognize that certificates requiring 18 or more hours will require University of Illinois approval up to and including IBHE.

2. The certificate should be administered by the appropriate academic unit.

Currently certificate programs at UIS are administered at the department level. The committee recommends that this is the most appropriate location.

3. Hours completed for a certificate program may be applied toward a Master’s degree with the approval of the appropriate academic unit. For example, Environmental Studies offers a concentration in the risk sciences. Students who have completed, or who are enrolled, in the risk certificate requirements may apply those credits to their master’s degree in Environmental Studies.

4. The proposed outline for approval of graduate certificates should follow the outline provided as a draft document (Berman, 12/3/01) with the following addition to item G.4. Tracking should include a description of the completion process, the record keeping and the collection of fees.

The Graduate Council may want to discuss the issue of fees.