

Attachment 1

Rationale: Changes to Policies Affecting Academic Minor

Background

As managing partner of the Big 12 Engineering Consortium, K-State's College of Engineering and K-State's Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering were approached by the nuclear industry [Omaha Public Power District (OPPD), Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation (WCNOC), etc.] regarding developing a minor in Nuclear Engineering that would be available to their employees who graduated from Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) accredited engineering program. These employees may have an engineering degree in chemical, mechanical, or electrical engineering and would like to enhance their expertise in the nuclear engineering area by taking additional online courses and may even decide to pursue a graduate degree paid for by their employers. The industry sees a minor as carrying more credibility than an undergraduate certificate.

Current academic policy provides for awarding minors only as part of an undergraduate degree and consequently only to K-State graduates. Several minor programs, such as the School of Leadership Studies, have suggested that this policy be eased to allow K-State graduates to complete a minor after completion of their undergraduate degree. The industry request that K-State's Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering offer an online minor for professionals would require the current policy be modified further to allow non-K-State graduates to complete minors. Existing policy allows students with baccalaureate degrees to be admitted as non-degree students and complete up to 15 credit hours. Financial aid is available in the form of student loans.

The possibility of changing academic policy to accommodate the K-State Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering was taken to the Committee on Academic Policy and Procedures (CAPP) and subsequently to Faculty Senate Academic Affairs.

Rationale for Proposed Changes

A review of policies at other Big 12 institutions revealed that five institutions (Iowa State, Oklahoma State, University of Kansas, University of Nebraska, and University of Colorado) allow their own graduates to complete minors after receiving their baccalaureate degree. Two institutions (University of Missouri and University of Oklahoma) require that the minor be completed at the same time as the baccalaureate degree. The remaining four institutions handle requests on a case-by-case basis.

Members of both CAPP and Faculty Senate Academic Affairs support extending completion of the minor to K-State students who have already completed their baccalaureate degree. Arguments made by several programs were that students often don't realize the value of a minor/increased value that breadth brings in both the workforce and quality of life experiences until relatively late in their academic programs.

The key concern lay with admitting non-K-State graduates as non-degree students for the purpose of completing an undergraduate minor. The request for the development of a minor that would serve a professional clientele beyond those at K-State seems desirable in terms of capitalizing on K-State faculty expertise but raised concerns regarding protecting the quality of academic programs if it were extended broadly. The changes being recommended create an approval process for minor programs that want to accept non-K-State graduates that parallels the approval process we use for both courses and curricula.

Proposed Changes

Undergraduate Catalogue: Minors, Secondary Majors, and Certificates (<http://catalog.k-state.edu/content.php?catoid=13&navoid=1411>)

University Handbook, F160 (<http://www.k-state.edu/academicpersonnel/fhbook/>)

Updated Approval, Routing, and Notification Procedures for Course & Curriculum Changes (<http://www.k-state.edu/registrar/ccap/>)