DATE: October 28, 2013

TO: Deans, School/College Academic Planners, Department Chairs, Department Administrators, Directors of Graduate Study, Graduate Studies Committee Chairs, Graduate Program Coordinators, Educational Innovation (EI) Point People, University Council on Academic Affairs and Assessment (UCAAA), Jocelyn Milner, Maureen Bischof, Scott Owczarek, Susan Fischer, Cathy Easter, Wren Singer, Katy Duren, Judith Strand, Tim Norris, Chris Olsen, Steve Stern, Patrick Sims, Lori Berquam, Steve Hahn, Eden Inoway-Ronnie, and Becci Menghini

CC: Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC), Steve Ackerman, Lea Jacobs, Daniel Kleinman, Donna Paulnock, Wendy Crone, Kelly Haslam, and Jennifer Martin

FROM: Martin Cadwallader, Vice Chancellor for Research and Dean of the Graduate School

RE: Graduate School Policy Changes Related to the Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) Criteria for Institutional Accreditation

A series of new policies were approved by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) on October 11, 2013 and the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC) on October 24, 2013. Although prompted by the Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) institutional accreditation criteria, these policy changes are one of the many ways in which our campus ensures the integrity of its degrees and the quality of the student experience.

The approved vote items to be effective Fall 2014 included policy changes in the following categories:

- Minimum Graduate Residence Credit Requirement
- Minimum Graduate Degree Credit Requirement
- Minimum Graduate Course Work Requirement
- Prior Course Work
- Maximum Credits per Term
- Effective Dates
A GFEC Subcommittee was charged in March to review policies and practices related to the HLC’s criteria for institutional accreditation and recommended the above policies to move the campus into compliance and to address other related impacts. This GFEC Subcommittee engaged in a deliberative process for eight months by communicating with campus constituencies and reviewing relevant data. Where data were available, the committee found the vast majority of programs already in compliance with new policies. In many cases, programs simply need to articulate their practices into stated policies.

To facilitate the implementation process, several resources are available in the Graduate School’s Admin KnowledgeBase (GSAdminKB) including Frequently Asked Questions and the creation of a “Program Update Template for HLC-Related Policies.” Schools/colleges are welcomed to use this template with their graduate programs to facilitate the process of reviewing compliance with these new policies. If schools/colleges wish to supplement this form with other school/college curricular approval practices, they are welcome to do so.

The GFEC is requesting that schools/colleges provide a brief summary of compliance of their graduate programs with the new policies along with the collection of completed templates from their graduate programs. The summaries will be presented to the GFEC as information items and should be submitted by schools/colleges on or before April 2, 2014. Thus, schools/colleges may wish to have an internal deadline for their programs’ policy compliance in advance of this date. Graduate programs should retain copies of completed templates to facilitate required updates for the Graduate Catalog due May 1, 2014; further details on this process will be sent directly to Graduate Program Coordinators later in the Fall 2013 term.

The Graduate School views these policy changes as an important avenue to maintain the quality and integrity of all of our graduate programs. While the Graduate School sets baseline requirements, in many cases, graduate programs can set more rigorous requirements. For general policy questions, please contact Kelly Haslam, Assistant Dean for Academic Assessment and Funding at haslam@grad.wisc.edu or Wendy Crone, Associate Dean for Graduate Education at wcrone@grad.wisc.edu. For school/college process questions, please contact your school/college academic planning deans and staff.

Graduate School
Bascom Hall University of Wisconsin-Madison 500 Lincoln Drive Madison, WI 53706-1380

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