TO: Graduate Program Leadership of Units with Accredited Programs

FROM: Wendy Crone
Associate Dean of Graduate Education

RE: Exception Pathway to Allow Undergraduate Credits Toward a Graduate Degree Based on Specialized Accreditation

CC: Kelly Haslam, Assistant Dean, Graduate School
Jennifer Martin, Academic Planning Specialist, Graduate School

You are receiving this memo due to your leadership role with a graduate program that may have one or more of the following situations: your graduate program is accredited; your school/college is accredited; your unit has an accredited non-graduate program; and/or a UW-Madison accredited undergraduate program is a feeder for your graduate program. If this does not apply to you, you may disregard the rest of this message. If your program fits into one of these categories, please note a recently approved exception pathway that your graduate program may want to consider pursuing, if eligible.

As you will recall, a series of new Graduate School 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, the GFEC Subcommittee charged with developing these policies took to opportunity to take a comprehensive review of policies associated with credit minimums, residency, and use of prior course work towards a graduate degree. Please refer to the following link for complete details on these policies: https://kb.wisc.edu/gsadminkb/page.php?id=34777.

In the Prior Course Work policy, programs may decide to accept coursework completed outside of the student’s graduate career at UW-Madison when those courses are rigorous and meet the expectations of graduate work for the degree. When considering the undergraduate category of prior course work, the GFEC restricted the seven credits of
undergraduate work to UW-Madison courses because of the challenges associated with assessing the rigor of courses taught at other institutions.

A recent request from an accredited program and conversations with a few other programs prompted the Graduate School to propose an exception pathway to allow seven credits of undergraduate credits from non UW-Madison institutions to count toward a graduate degree based on specialized accreditation. This proposal was presented and approved by the GFEC on June 6, 2014. The approved policy is as follows:

An exception to allow up to seven credits from an undergraduate degree earned at a non UW-Madison institution to count toward a UW-Madison graduate degree can be requested on a program-by-program basis when the following two conditions are met:

1) students have received their undergraduate degree in the same discipline as they are pursuing graduate work, and
2) the undergraduate degree has been granted from a program which is accredited by the same accrediting body as the UW-Madison program.

Should a program decide to request an exception to this policy, it must provide the Graduate School with information requested on the undergraduate credit exception form to be eligible for consideration. Please note submission of an exception request does not provide assurance of its approval.

If your program believes it meets these criteria, you may make a request for this exception by completing the steps as outlined in the attached request form. A request may be made at any time, but please note that the earliest date for implementation is the term AFTER Graduate School approval. Please direct any questions to Jennifer Martin at jamartin1@grad.wisc.edu.