February 26, 2014

GRADUATE COUNCIL CHAIRS

Re: CCGA Guidance on Degree Titles

Dear Graduate Council Chairs:

CCGA believes in the importance of the principle that academic graduate degrees are properly part of the state-supported educational and research enterprise embodied in the University of California. Consequently, academic graduate programs should not be expected to or allowed to finance themselves, and special fee provisions such as are available under PDST and SSP policies should be carefully demarcated as applying to professional degrees.

In recent years CCGA has tried to uphold the distinctiveness of academic graduate degrees by enforcing the view that a professional Master’s degree should not be an M.A. or M.S., but rather a Master of X (with X being whatever the professional specialization is). For instance, with new state requirements for additional training for CPA licensure, several campuses recently developed a Master’s degree in the field of Professional Accountancy, and the title “Master of Professional Accountancy” was used at these campuses at CCGA’s request.

CCGA therefore recommends to local Graduate Councils and Graduate Deans that in the development and review of new proposals this distinction be carefully observed. Proposals involving PDST or SSP funding should be described as professional degree proposals and should by default use Master of X rather than M.A. or M.S. Use of the latter terms in proposals involving PDST or SSP funding should be put forward with an explicit justification. (Such a justification might be the requirements of an accrediting or licensing authority, or the generally accepted practice of a discipline on a national basis.)

Previously approved degrees that do not follow this practice are not required to change titles. We have no desire to create extra work for those who have already been reviewed and approved. But if any program wishes to seek a name change to conform to this recommendation, CCGA will look favorably upon such a request.

BACKGROUND

For the past few years CCGA has insisted in several cases that a professional Master’s degree put forward, with a request for PDST or for self-supporting status, should use the title Master of X degree rather than M.A. in X or M.S in X. The aim has been to maintain, as far as possible, the distinction between academic degree programs (ineligible for PDST or SP-status) and professional degree programs (eligible for such treatment).

Here are titles observed in the past three years that conform to this usage:

Master of Professional Accountancy (D, I, R), all SSP
Master of Information and Data Science (B), SSP
Master of Translational Medicine (B), SSP
Master of Advanced Studies in Integrated Circuits (S), SSP
Master of Public Health (online) (B), SSP
Master of Engineering (B), SSP
(Fe)MBA (R), SSP
Master of Finance (R), SSP
Master of Technology Management (SB), PDST
Master of Finance (SD), SSP

On the other hand, CCGA has also approved these degrees in the past three years:

M.S. in Healthcare Administration and Interprofessional Leadership (SF), SSP
M.S. in Games and Playable Media (SC), PDST
M.S. in Biotechnology Management (I), PDST
M.S. in Engineering Management (I), PDST
M.S. in Engineering (online) (R), SSP

The distinction has also been maintained in some cases by using the M.A.S. title (a degree that is by definition self-supporting). M.A.S. programs were originally defined as part-time and off-campus, but on at least one campus the definition has been loosened to cover full-time, on-campus programs. CCGA prefers the solution of using Master of X.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Donald Mastronarde, Ph.D.
Chair, CCGA

Copy: William Jacob, Academic Council Chair
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CCGA
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