

**Proposition: 09-11/12**

**Sponsor:** Anne Hubbell (A&S) and Julia Barello (A&S)

**Proposed Assignment:** Long Range Planning 12/1/11

**Title:** Change in Honorary Degrees for Deceased Students

**Proposal**

This proposition requests adding to policy 6.75 (Honorary Degrees) in the NMSU Policy Manual. Currently the policy reads as follows:

- A. Bachelor's: An honorary bachelor's degree may be awarded under the following conditions:
1. A student who has completed all but the final semester of a degree program at the university is by accident, serious illness, death, or other unanticipated event prevented permanently from completing the final semester of study;
  2. Prior to involuntary termination of enrollment, the candidate's record provides evidence of consistent satisfactory academic progress; and
  3. The candidate or candidate's family is willing to accept the degree as recognition of the candidate's accomplishments.

We propose altering #1 and #2 as follows:

1. A student who has completed all but the final semester of a degree program at the university or demonstrated strong effort to complete their degree, but not in their final semester of a degree program is by accident, serious illness, death, or other unanticipated event prevented permanently from completing their degree at NMSU.
2. Prior to involuntary termination of enrollment, the candidate's record provides evidence of consistent satisfactory academic progress as determined by the department head in the student's home department; and

**Rationale**

Sometimes we experience the ultimate of tragedies, the death of a student. When the Department of Communication Studies experienced the loss of one of their students they requested the student receive an honorary Bachelor's degree. The policy, however, prevented us from giving this award to his family because he only completed 80 credits. He had, however, started 100 credits and was at NMSU for 8 years. Because of a cheerleading injury and subsequent surgeries, he experienced extreme health issues. He still persisted in his attempt to finish his degree, much to the stress and cost to his family. He passed away when he was expected to board a plane and return home for a doctor appointment.

What was learned from this experience was that often students have put in the effort required to have demonstrated mastery of a Major but because of health issues and/or their tragic death, they cannot be granted this honor unless they are in their last semester as a senior.

*We believe that the Department Head is in the best position to judge whether a student has demonstrated sufficient progress in their degree to receive a Bachelor's degree. We ask that they be allowed to make this recommendation based on their knowledge of the student and program requirements.*