University Area(s) Responsible: Office of the Provost, University Registrar
Policy Number & Name: 02-04 Posthumous Degree, Degree Memoriam & Certificate of Attendance
Approval Date: April 23, 2021

I. Introduction

Under exceptional circumstance such as death or incapacitation of a student, a posthumous degree, degree of memoriam or certificate of attendance may be awarded. The student’s immediate family or the academic department chairperson may request that a posthumous degree, degree memoriam or certificate of attendance be awarded via a written request within 1-year of the student’s death or incapacitation. The college dean may forward their recommendation to the Provost, President and Board of Trustees that a posthumous degree, degree memoriam or certificate of attendance be awarded. This in essences is to provide the family of the deceased or incapacitated student with an acknowledgement of the student’s accomplishments.

This policy, governing the criteria for awarding of posthumous degrees and certificate of attendance to undergraduate and graduate students, applies only to students enrolled in degree-awarding undergraduate and graduate programs at Delaware State University.

II. Policy Statement

This policy is designed to establish standard criteria and procedures under which posthumous awards may be granted to undergraduate and graduate students in degree programs.

III. Definitions

Posthumous Degree means a degree conferred by the University to a matriculated deceased student who completed at least 90 credits (75%) of undergraduate degree requirements at the time of death or incapacitation or completion of a minimum of 75% of credits towards the graduate degree along with sufficient completion of capstone requirements such as successful completion of comprehensive examination, thesis, or dissertation, as noted by the graduate program. This degree is included in the official degree count for the institution.

Degree in Memoriam means a degree awarded to a matriculated deceased student who completed less than 75% of degree requirements. For an undergraduate student, completion of 30 credits to 89 credits towards the baccalaureate degree. For graduate students, completion of less than 75% of the total program credits at the time of death or incapacitation. This would also include insufficient completion of thesis, dissertations, or other capstone degree requirements. This award is not included in the total degree count for the institution.

Certificate of Attendance means the student attended Delaware State University earning less than 30 undergraduate credits and less than 12 graduate credits.
IV. Policy

This posthumous degree policy establishes a consistently administered means for the University to recognize the academic achievements of students who were enrolled at the time of their death or incapacitation and to commemorate their achievements. This recognition is reserved for degree candidates who, in addition to current enrollment in a degree program in the university and good academic standing, have substantially completed 75% of degree requirements for a baccalaureate degree or graduate degree. Awarding of posthumous degrees requires evaluation of the student’s record to ensure the integrity of the academic degree and the institution. Therefore, posthumous degrees may only be awarded in cases when specific criteria are met via evaluation of the student’s academic record, pursuant to the procedures described below.

V. Academic Requirements

To be considered for a posthumous degree, degree of memoriam or certificate of attendance, the following requirements must be met:

A. Posthumous Degree

1. The student was actively enrolled in a degree program at the time of death or incapacity.

2. The student was in good academic and disciplinary standing holding a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher for undergraduate and 3.0 for graduate students.

3. Program Completion
   a. For a baccalaureate degree, having completed a minimum of 90 credits of degree program.
   b. For baccalaureate degree candidates, (a) all coursework and other degree requirements would have been completed in the semester that the student passed away or became incapacitated, or (b) within one additional semester of university attendance.
   c. For master’s degree candidates in degree programs without a thesis requirement, all coursework and other degree requirements would have been completed in the semester that the student passed away or became incapacitated. In addition, for the master degree candidates, in degree programs with a thesis requirement, the Dean of Graduate Studies shall consult with the Chair and members of the thesis committee and make a determination that the thesis was substantially completed, i.e., that a full draft exists and that the student could have defended the thesis during the semester in which he or she passed away or became incapacitated.
   d. For doctoral degree candidates, all coursework and other degree requirements would have been completed in the semester that the student passed or otherwise became incapacitated. The Dean of Graduate Studies shall consult with the Chair and members of the dissertation committee and make a determination that the dissertation was substantially completed, i.e., that a full draft exists and that the student could have defended the dissertation during the semester in which he or she died or incapacitated.

B. Degree Memoriam

1. The student was actively enrolled at the time of death or incapacity.
2. The student was in good academic standing holding a cumulative grade point average of
2.0 or higher for undergraduate and 3.0 for graduate students.
3. The student earned between 30 to 89 undergraduate credits or less than 75% of graduate academic program requirements.

C. Certificate of Attendance
1. The student was actively enrolled at the time of death or incapacity and not able to return to school.
2. The student completed less than 30 undergraduate credits or less than 12 graduate credits.

VI. PROCEDURES
1. A student who is enrolled in a degree program in the university at the time of his/her death or incapacitation may be nominated for a posthumous degree, degree of memoriam or certificate of attendance by the academic program department chairperson and supported by the college dean. A member of the student’s family may initiate the request directly to the department chair or dean.

2. The Dean of the academic unit in which the student is enrolled will recommend the candidate in the form of a formal written request to the Associate Provost for academic and student services or the Dean of Graduate Studies, as appropriate. The request must include the name and ID number of the student, the degree to be awarded, and the recommended semester for degree conferral. Verification of death or incapacitation of the student, enrollment status, academic standing and progress on degree requirements must be included with the request.

3. The Associate Provost or the Dean of Graduate Studies will make a recommendation to the Provost.

4. Upon review and approval by the BOT, the Provost or designee will notify the Office of the University Registrar via memo to initiate the process for a degree posting. The Office of the Registrar will notify the appropriate personnel for commencement arrangements. The Dean of the academic unit will inform the immediate family of the university’s decision to recognize the student with a posthumous degree, degree memoriam or certificate of attendance. If the family desires to represent the student and receive the diploma at a commencement ceremony, this arrangement must be conveyed sufficiently early to be included in the planning process for commencement. The Dean of the academic unit will also advise the individual who made the request of its final disposition, if the person who forwarded the nomination to the Dean is not a member of the deceased’s family.

5. Unless otherwise requested, the approved action will be conferred at the next regularly scheduled commencement ceremony. The posthumous degree/degree memoriam/certificate of attendance may be presented to a member of the student’s family or their representative. A posthumous degree/degree memoriam may also be presented by an appropriate university official to the family in a private gathering, separate from the commencement ceremony. The commencement program will note that the degree was awarded posthumously. The graduation application fee shall be waived.

6. The Office of the University Registrar will post the notice of the award of the posthumous degree to the student’s transcript. There will not be any indication of a posthumous award of the degree on the student’s diploma.