**Title IV Funding and Certificate Program Eligibility**

**Eligibility and Credit Hours**:

If we want the certificate itself to be a program that is eligible for financial aid from the federal government (so that any student could enroll in it in addition to their degree), the certificate must meet these parameters:

1. It must take at least one academic year to complete
2. It must have sufficient credits to allow full time enrollment in both semesters of that year (9+9=18 for Grad; 12+12=24 for undergrad).
3. For undergraduate, it can be no greater than 36 credits. For graduate, no greater than 29 credits.
4. It must be offered in such a way that students could, theoretically, enroll full time each semester, even if that is not the way they usually do it. In other words, courses must be offered often enough and in the appropriate sequence that would make that possible.

I realize these are challenging criteria to meet, given the SCH of most of our current certificates

**Recommendations:**

* We need to modify existing certificates (those with solid enrollment) to assure that they fulfill these criteria, even though this will mean securing THECB approval (UG: 21-36 hours; G: 16-29 hours). This will require using the “New Certificate Program Proposal,” even for existing certificates, as the shorter certificates were never sent to the THECB in the past.
* We need to consider creating any new certificates to meet these criteria, in order to assure they will be covered by financial aid.
* For shorter graduate certificates, students can declare the Masters in Professional Science and attach a shorter certificate to that degree plan, if warranted
* For shorter undergraduate certificates, we should consider creating minors that are equivalent to the certificate, so that the students may declare the minor as part of their degree plan.

**Eligibility and Gainful Employment requirements**:

* We are no longer required to report employment data in order to “prove” gainful employment, which alleviates the reporting pressure that once limited these certificates.
* The federal government does still expect certificates to lead to employment and could question a certificate, on that basis, if they chose to do so. The justifications that we typically provide to the THECB as part of getting approval for a new certificate should suffice as a rationale for that (the form includes job market need).
* Any certificate that does not have sufficient enrollment over the past five years will lose eligibility for inclusion in the “Program Participation Agreement” for Title IV funding.

**Recommendations:**

* For job market data, faculty leaders will want to inquire of potential employers whether they would expect a student to have the certificate PLUS a degree, or whether they would employ someone who has the certificate without a degree. In many cases, employers will hire someone with a specific post-bac certificate, but might not consider a job candidate who holds a certificate without a degree. This does not mean that we could not make such a certificate eligible for financial aid (given that it would lead to employment in certain cases), but that we would need to be honest in advising students regarding whether a specific certificate would be appropriate in their particular circumstance.
* Partnerships with employers who agree to hire students with certain qualifications aligned with your certificate are the strongest method of justification.
* We must recruit students into these certificates and monitor enrollment in certificates to assure that they remain viable.

Certificates currently listed as eligible on Financial Aid website:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Program Name** | **SCH** |
| Accountancy | **15** |
| Intelligence and National Security Studies | **15** |
| Teaching English to Speak Other Language (ESOL) | **12** |
| Technical and Professional Writing | **12** |
| Women’s Studies | **12** |
| Public Health | **15** |
| Nursing Education | **9** |
| Post Master’s Nursing | **49** |

The first 7 will no longer be eligible, as they do not qualify. Nursing will remain eligible – it has special dispensation from the max 29 rule, due to accreditation requirements.

Certificates that will become eligible in July:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Program Name** | **SCH** |
| Grad Certificate in Quant Methods in Psyc | **18** |
| Grad Certificate in Teaching English | **18** |
| Grad Certificate in Teaching Political Science | **18** |
| Higher Education Endorsement | **18** |
| Alternative Certification | **30** |
| Graduate Cert - Healthcare Mgmt | **18** |
| Certificate in Engineering Education | **18** |
| Certificate in Biological Sciences | **18** |
| Certificate in Chemistry | **18** |
| Post Master's Certificate in Psyc Mental Health\* | **29-40** |

***\*Pending THECB approval***