SUBJECT: Academic Affairs
Policy 202.1 Professional Certification Program
Effective: June 2007    Revised:

I. General
Professional Certification programs are intended to prepare an individual for a specific occupation or occupational work area by focusing on developing the unique skill-set required for that position. In many cases, these programs allow students to qualify for a new job, achieve a promotion, explore a new career, or provide documented/credentialed study in a specific field or area of expertise. More specifically, Professional Certifications are designed for individuals who seek:

- Introductory-level knowledge and skills to enter a field
- Advanced study in a specific topic area
- Practical or functional training to complement a formal course of academic study
- Industry-required training for skills maintenance or up-grade
- Cross training within their fields

II. Program Criteria and Requirements
Programs may qualify as a Great Falls College MSU (GFC MSU) Professional Certification Program if the following criteria and requirements are met:

A. Criteria – The following are considered general criteria that all Professional Certification Programs offered by the College should meet:

- The program may be completed in a compressed and/or short timeframe;
- Upon completion of the program, graduates will be eligible for a specific occupation;
- There are adequate occupational openings, either currently or projected, for the profession the program is designed to prepare students for; and
- The program is offered in response to an identified community need.

B. Curricular Requirements

- Must have a minimum of 225 and no more than 375 of classroom hours
- A minimum of one-half (1/2) of the required coursework must come from institutionally approved credit-bearing coursework
- Up to one-half (1/2) of the required hours may be through non-credit coursework (Approximately 100-200 hours)
- All coursework should be considered “technical” in nature – a technical course would have course outcomes that are directly related to the requisite skills needed for the intended occupation

C. Graduation Requirements
To successfully achieve a Professional Certification, having this achievement noted on the student’s transcript, the student must complete the following:

- All required coursework within the program with a passing letter grade for traditional credit-bearing coursework, or a grade of PASS on PCE courses graded as PASS/FAIL; and
- A GFC MSU graduation application and submit the completed form and appropriate fees to the Registrar’s office.
III. **New Program/Program Modification Approval Process**

Approval of Professional Certification programs or modification to currently approved programs is a three-step process as outlined below:

1. The Division Director within the appropriate academic unit(s) of the College must endorse the proposed program. This endorsement should be identified in the program justification.

2. Program curriculum and justification must be submitted to the Professional & Continuing Education Advisory Committee for review, discussion, and approval.

3. Program curriculum and justification must be submitted to the Curriculum Committee for final approval.