

Preamble/Rationale to Guidelines for Certificates

In proposing the following guidelines for certificates, Faculty Senate wishes to underline some contexts that led to their adoption as well as some long-term considerations.

Context

As the administration of the college is anticipating a significant drop in student enrollment starting in 2026, they are seeking to both build up our endowment and diversify our offerings and sources of revenue. The certificates currently stand at the juncture of both strategies.

- Certificates may contribute some revenue to the college.
- Certificates have been connected to major donor gifts.

Rationale

Given the particular circumstances faced by the college, the Senate wishes to present guidelines for certificates as we anticipate them being proposed for Senate approval.

The Senate recognizes that certificates do not have to be simply a remedy for harsh financial times. They may be an occasion for academic innovation in ways that support our mission as a Christian Liberal Arts college (ie. provide an outlet for departments to try new programs and educational approaches at low financial risk). They may provide additional teaching opportunities and potential revenue for current and retired faculty. They may help our alumni continue to grow as "thoughtful scholars, grateful servants and faithful leaders"; they may be a place of interdisciplinary collaboration as well as excellent teaching; they may help Westmont develop or further relationships with the Santa Barbara community; they may include off-campus experiences (i.e. May Term) that would support or expand on our global offerings.

We also want to express concern about the potential contradictions between certificate programs and our mission as an undergraduate, residential Christian Liberal Arts college. The guidelines are an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of these contradictions.

Finally, the guidelines do not resolve the administrative problems that certificates are likely to raise, including managing appropriate staffing (primarily from our full-time faculty); program review; changes in student demographics; impact on our enrollment cap; and additional challenges they may pose for the Provost, registrar, department chairs, and others.