Degree Conferral for Students Completing Requirements in Summer

# Purpose

Move the date for conferring degrees for students who complete degree requirements in the summer so that it occurs before the official fall census date (currently add/drop day) so that student type can be properly classified in the fall census file. Allow graduate students who complete degree requirements in the summer to have their degree conferred at this earlier time (while still keeping the later graduate student conferral date as well).

**Current Situation**

Undergraduate students completing degree requirements in the summer have to wait until late September to have their degrees conferred. This causes improper classification of student type for those who are continuing their education as a graduate student at UVM. These students do not have their student type changed to new graduate student until after the official fall census date. Thus, in official reports, they are seen as continuing student. Analysis regarding time to degree for graduate students are difficult because of improper student type classification.

Graduate students completing degree requirements in the summer have to wait until late October to have their degrees conferred. This later time (than undergraduate students) is required because graduate student who miss May graduation because of needing to complete and defend a thesis or dissertation need access to faculty for document review, committee meetings, defense dates and review of revisions to the thesis or dissertation. Those who have 9 month faculty advisors and committee members do not have access to these faculty in the summer.

**Benefits**

* Graduate students graduating in August will also be summer graduates allowing those in professional programs who are seeking licensure to sit for licensure two months earlier than now possible.
  + For example, clinical psychology graduate students must complete a one year internship that is required by the APA before graduation, but not part of UVM curriculum per se. Each year some students complete that internship after the May graduation. They currently cannot sit for their licensing exam in some states until the degree is conferred, currently putting as much as a 5 month delay.
  + Note that we must keep the October option for graduation for graduate students as those with thesis and dissertation requirements who miss May graduation may not have sufficient access to their committee and advisors from the 9 month faculty over the summer to complete and successfully defend their thesis or dissertation over the summer.
* Proper analysis regarding time to degree and graduate student flow
* Undergraduates graduating in August would be considered true summer graduates allowing them to be counted as six-year graduates (see <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/VisFaqView.aspx?mode=reg&id=4&show=all#182>). This will help us with our US News and World Report rankings.

**Possible Solution**

***Move conferring of degrees to the fourth Monday of August as opposed to fourth Monday of September***

Resources Needed

* Student service professionals need to validate degree confirmation by the fourth Monday of August in order for Faculty Senate to confer the degrees
* Faculty Senate process would need to change; possible scenarios:
  + Meet on the fourth Monday of August (which is generally the first day of classes) to confer degrees
  + Provisionally approve summer graduates at the las spring meeting.
  + Change process for approving this cohort of graduates

This solution reaps all benefits outlined in the benefits section of this proposal.