

RESTRUCTURING CERTIFICATES FOR THE SCHEV INVENTORY
November 2017

Background

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) must approve (or be notified of) all degree programs and awards offered in Virginia, and SCHEV then publishes this program inventory to the public. Each program is identified by a CIP code, a code used to track educational programs (topic, level, enrollment, etc.) by the federal government’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

SCHEV allows **one program** (degree or certificate) to be reported **per CIP code per level**:

- Bachelor’s degrees
- Master’s degrees
- Doctoral degrees
- Certificates (Includes both what Mason calls “undergraduate” certificates and graduate certificates, which SCHEV lumps together as “post-baccalaureate” certificates.)

Unfortunately, the CIP taxonomy does not represent certain topic areas very deeply, and there are not as many CIP codes as there are Mason certificates in quite a number of areas. In addition, SCHEV’s restriction of one program per CIP per level has presented an obstacle to offering multiple closely-related certificates tailored to different audiences.

Historically, Mason has reported multiple certificates related to a given CIP code by reporting the entire population of students under the name of whichever certificate was established first. For the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, for example, all four certificates have been reported under Advanced Skills, so the other certificate programs do not appear on the SCHEV inventory at all.

Mason’s Catalog	SCHEV Inventory	CIP code
Advanced Skills	Advanced Skills	30.0501
Prevention, Reconstruction & Stabilization Contexts	Advanced Skills	30.0501
World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution	Advanced Skills	30.0501
Conflict Resolution in Communities	Advanced Skills	30.0501

However, that approach is now causing administrative problems around the distribution of student financial aid for Veteran’s Administration funds. The V.A. is verifying enrollment against the SCHEV inventory, and obviously, many of the programs do not appear. In order to avoid further problems for our veteran students and their families, Mason has no choice but to rearrange our certificate offerings so that we do in fact have one CIP code per certificate.

Options for Resolution

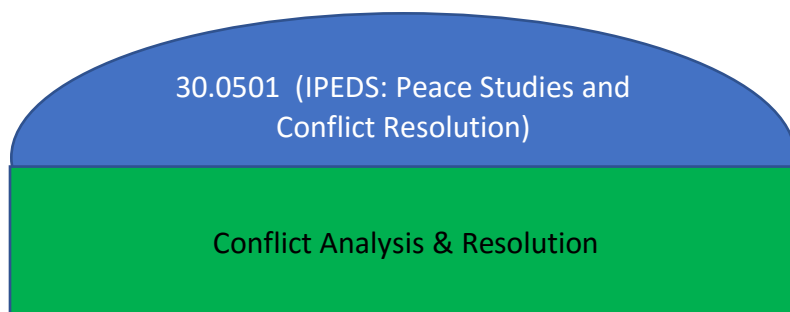
To achieve one program per CIP per level, there are three basic possibilities.

1. **Available CIP codes.** In a few cases, there is a newer CIP code available that better fits one of the certificates, in which case a certificate program can simply move to the available CIP.

2. **Consolidation as Concentrations under an Umbrella.** The central tactic we propose to use to address this issue is consolidation, meaning that we would consolidate several existing certificates as concentrations under a generic, umbrella title, which would then technically be only one certificate under the CIP code. There is no policy requirement for a common core courses in certificates, so certificate curricula can be moved intact under the umbrella certificate but would now technically be concentrations under the generic title.
3. **Closure.** If existing certificates are not enrolling well, it may be desirable to close them and thus reduce the number of moving parts in this enterprise. Historically, colleges have been reluctant to close anything given how difficult it can be to open new programs. In this case, however, it makes little sense to transfer certificates with little or no enrollment to the new structure, because once the new umbrella certificates are established, ***concentrations can be closed and opened with internal Mason approval alone. New concentrations do not have to go to SCHEV.***

Establishing the Umbrella Certificates

Umbrella certificates will consist of a generic umbrella that shelters multiple curricula – e.g., we would pick up existing certificates, and drop them *as concentrations* under the generic umbrella, like this:



Concentrations:

- **Advanced Skills**
- **Prevention, Reconstruction and Stabilization Contexts**
- **World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution**
- **Conflict Resolution in Communities**

Umbrella certificates will have a very basic general title and a concentration title that is derived from the existing certificate. Students' transcripts and hard copy certificates will include both names, e.g., Conflict Analysis and Resolution: Advanced Skills. Minor wordsmithing may be desired – for example, for the World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution concentration area, the faculty might decide to shorten that to just World Religions and Diplomacy, because the conflict analysis language is already captured in the generic title.

In this way, Mason would be able to preserve its variety of programs and also satisfy the SCHEV requirement. Unlike degree programs, SCHEV does not have a policy requiring a common core for certificates.

Request to the Colleges

Colleges are asked for help in reviewing their certificate programs and proposing the following:

- Appropriate roll-up arrangements for umbrellas – e.g., which existing certificates should roll up as concentrations under which new umbrellas, and under which CIP code.
- New generic umbrella names (remembering that this will be your framework for the future).
- Concentration names that appropriately embed current curricula into the new umbrella name. Wordsmithing to make things smooth is okay; substantial curriculum change is different.

In general, colleges can propose rearranging their programs how they wish, using the same or related codes. In most cases, these CIP codes align naturally with college disciplines, so colleges can propose reassignments with just a few additional constraints (discussed below). Choice is intrinsically limited by the CIP taxonomy and its definitions, but there may be instances where faculty want to move things around a bit.

However, there are two multidisciplinary topic areas that will require conversations across colleges to decide how to handle the university's multiple and complex offerings in these arenas: (1) anything pertaining to big data sets or the analysis thereof, and (2) homeland security. We will facilitate discussions to identify mutually agreeable umbrella titles and certificate descriptions.

The CIP taxonomy is available at <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/browse.aspx?y=55>

Colleges are also asked to respect two other constraints when reorganizing certificates.

- Umbrellas should hold only CERBs (“undergraduate” certificates, in Mason’s terminology) or CERGs (graduate certificates). An umbrella can have a range of credits, but the range should be reasonable, and to combine undergraduate and graduate certificates would make for a very strange credit range.
- Umbrellas must be 100% Gainful Employment or not at all. The financial aid office will simply not be able to package financial aid at the concentration level and keep accurate records.
- Gainful employment certificates should not move CIPs. If you absolutely cannot make things work without moving a Gainful Employment certificate from its current CIP code, please contact Claudia Rector, Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs, at crector@gmu.edu. It is *possible* to move these, but it requires many administrative steps with outside agencies, and it’s complicated.

If a substantial curriculum change is desired, please contact Claudia Rector at crector@gmu.edu or 3-8679. We will have an expedited approval process for this kind of “housekeeping” action, but meaningful curriculum change may require normal Graduate Council approval.

This action will change how certificates are listed in the catalog, however, so links in websites and advising materials will need to be edited.

Implementation Timeline

In order to make the catalog deadline for 2018-19, the timeline is extremely brisk. The Office of Accreditation and Program Integrity (OAPI) will assume the majority of the administrative work. However, we need faculty input on the organization to make sure that our new arrangement is logical and true to the nature of the certificates' curricula.

November 2-28

Colleges identify:

- Names for new umbrellas
- Preferred arrangement of certificates within CIPs assigned to the college
- Certificates to be incorporated into interdisciplinary umbrellas
- **Please provide this information to the Office of Accreditation and Program Integrity (OAPI) by December 1, 2017. oapi@gmu.edu.**

November 29

The Office of Accreditation and Program Integrity (OAPI) will hold meetings to facilitate the creation of interdisciplinary umbrellas. For certificates for which the college would like to have as part of one of the interdisciplinary areas of big data/analytics or homeland security and rolling up under one of those CIP codes, colleges will need to send a representative to meetings on **Thursday, November 29 in 3300 Merten Hall, from 1-3 pm**. We will collectively build these certificates in these meetings, discussing big data/analytics at 1 pm, and homeland security at 2 pm.

January

OAPI will facilitate expedited approval through Graduate Council to meet the catalog deadline.

February – August

OAPI will prepare certificate notifications and work with SCHEV to correct the inventory. This will be a lot of work for the registrar's office so we need to allow them time to do the new mapping, move students, etc.

This is not the ideal timeline for this kind of action, but correcting the SCHEV inventory as soon as possible is essential for protecting financial aid for our students. If you encounter difficulties in rearranging your certificates, please contact Claudia Rector, Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs, at crector@gmu.edu.

Your patience and understanding is very much appreciated.