



Committee Meeting: Policy & Governance Committee	Date: January 12, 2026
Committee Chair: Melodie Baker	
New or Edited: New	

POLICY NAME: Posthumous Degree Policy

POLICY TYPE: Managerial

SUBMITTED BY: Vice President of Academic Affairs and Academic Standards

ISSUE OR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: To establish a policy and associated criteria for the awarding of a posthumous degree to a deceased student who did not fulfill the requirements of their degree program prior to their passing.

NEW OR EDITED POLICY: New.

POLICY:

Background

There is currently no SUNY system-wide policy or guidance on the issuance of posthumous degrees. At least 20 of the 64 SUNY campuses have established local policies and criteria on the awarding of posthumous degrees but the policies vary widely from campus to campus. At present, SUNY Erie has no policy on the awarding of posthumous degrees to those students who pass away prior to having completed the requirements of their degree program.

In December of 2023, SUNY Chancellor King presented to the Board of Trustees a resolution¹ which would charge the Chancellor with establishing a system-wide policy in SUNY for the awarding of posthumous degrees in accordance with Chapter 549 of the Laws of 2023² (“Mel’s Law”) named in honor of Melquain (Mel) Jatelle Anderson. Mel was a student who transferred from a community college to study at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice as his mother had. Tragically, Mel was murdered prior to being able to complete his degree.

¹ https://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/Reso_PosthumousDegrees_Dec2023.pdf

² https://nyassembly.gov/leg/?default_fld=&leg_video=&bn=A04942&term=&Summary=Y&Actions=Y&Memo=Y&Text=Y



POLICY NAME: Posthumous Degree Policy - **Continued**

Applicability

To be eligible for this recognition, students enrolled in associates degree programs at the time of their passing shall have completed a minimum of thirty (30) credits toward the degree, with at least six (6) credits completed at SUNY Erie. The student must have been in good academic and conduct standing at the time of their passing, with consideration given to extenuating circumstances related to their passing that may have impacted their standing.

Policy Procedure

To initiate the process, a member of the deceased student’s family, their spouse or significant other, or a SUNY Erie faculty or staff member, with agreement from the student’s family, may request this recognition through the Office of Academic Affairs. In such circumstances and upon verification of the student’s passing, the Office of Academic Affairs will review the request and make a recommendation to the President. If approved by the President and provided the deceased student has met the requirements of this policy, SUNY Erie will confer a degree. The diploma and transcript will be issued to the deceased student’s family at no charge and in accordance with applicable college protocol. The President, or designee, may approve exceptions to cases that do not meet the above criteria. SUNY Erie reserves the right to consider alternate honors for those who do not meet the above criteria and for whom an exception is not approved.

DOES IT SUPERCEDE A POLICY/WHICH ONE (if so, attach redline version): No

POLICY & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Policy & Governance Committee recommends the Board of Trustees accept the Managerial policy under Committee Briefings, Policy and Governance Committee. This Policy supersedes all prior policies/procedures and practices related to the Posthumous Degree Policy.

DATE OF BOARD ACCEPTANCE: January 29, 2026

POLICY & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TEAM FOLLOW-UP:

Following Trustee acceptance, this Managerial policy will be included in the SUNY Erie Community College Trustees Policy Manual and the College Catalog.

INFORMATION/INPUT CONSIDERED DURING POLICY & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS:

SUNY Memorandum to Presidents, 18 July 2025, Policy and Guidance: Posthumous Degrees



POLICY NAME: Posthumous Degree Policy - **Continued**

The Policy has been reviewed and discussed at the Policy & Governance Committee meeting of January 12, 2026.

History

Item:	Date:	Explanation:
Policy adopted	January 29, 2026	
Annual BOT Review/Reaffirmed		
Previously Reviewed and Extended		
Renamed		

SUNY Erie Cross References

Policy Name or Procedure:	Where to find: