Resolution to **define** the international graduate student program completion date so that it matches the program completion date applied to US citizens

**Resolution**

The UAF Faculty Senate recommends the Office of International Programs (OIP) to reconsider and revise UAF’s current definition of "completion date" for international graduate students. We suggest that the definition is revised so that the graduate program completion date is defined as the end of the semester when the graduate student has fully met all UAF graduate school requirements, and hence matches the one applied to US citizens.

**Motivation and background**

- According to U.S. immigration rules students in F-1 status have to leave the country within 2 months of the expiration of their visa, or the end date of their graduate program, whichever comes first. Currently UAF considers students in F-1 status to have completed their graduate program 10 days after the date of their defense or after the last in-person meeting of a required course. In contrast the graduate program for non-foreign students terminates at the end of the semester during which the students have fully met all UAF graduate school requirements.

- It is not clear that the current completion date policy was developed with input from a dedicated immigration attorney.

- Many other universities use a more realistic completion date, such as the end of the semester in which the student defends the thesis, or the date of graduation and degree conferral.

- Often, students do not take in-person coursework during the semester they finish their degree, instead taking 698 "thesis research" or similar, which does not extend their visa eligibility under the current definition.

- Typically, a students' thesis is not 100% complete at the date of the defense. The graduate committee recommends some amount of additional work, such as collecting supplementary data or refining the existing data analysis.

- Often, this additional post-defense work requires access to UAF equipment, such as specialized scientific instrumentation, computer software and hardware, or sample collections and datasets, that are not accessible from another location.

- Due to the current definition students can no longer be paid 10 days after his/her defense. This can be overcome by application for Optional Practical Training (OPT), however this is a time and resources consuming procedure for both the student and the university.