

Thoughts on Professional Practice and Education

Article 12: Life-Time Continuing Education Waiver with Academic Education

by Knud E. Hermansen[†]

P.L.S., P.E., Ph.D., Esq.

This is the twelfth article I have prepared in the series offering thoughts on professional practice and education. In this article I am going to reflect on formal education and continuing education requirements.

At the outset, I must point out the elephant in the room. I acknowledge that I hold a Ph.D. and a juris doctorate. I mention this since some will accuse me of self-serving when reading this article. I'm not going to surrender my degrees in order to appear unbiased. I was never known to shy from controversy in living my life or my writing. My contact information is on the web. Feel free to write and chastise me. Don't expect much self-reflection at my age. The sand in my life's hour glass is almost run out. At my age, changing course or my opinion is not likely to happen.

Let me get to the point of this article. Many states have adopted continuing education requirements for re-licensing. This article focuses on the disconnect between state continuing education regulations and academic education achievements.

In this article, I wish to focus on the fact that all states with continuing education requirements have decoupled the requirements for continuing education from academic education other than allow continuing education credit for an academic course taken in a renewal cycle. Specifically, states that require continuing education make no allowances for the achievement of formal academic education. By way of example, a state will require a certain number of professional development hours a year for all licensees regardless whether the licensee has no degree or a doctorate in the profession. This makes no practical sense, at least to me. Let me explain.

As a general rule, a one-credit academic course is worth fourteen professional development hours. A typical bachelor of science degree in the profession has at least 30 credit hours in focused professional course work. A master's degree in the profession has an additional 30 credit hours focused on professional course topics. Finally, a doctorate has another 60 credit hours above the master's degree focused on professional course topics. Therefore, a licensee with a master's degree has earned the equivalent of 420 professional development hours. A licensee with a master's and doctorate degree has earned the equivalent of 1,260 professional development hours. For a state that requires fifteen professional development hours a year, the licensee with a doctorate has achieved the equivalent of 84 years of continuing education. Unless the licensee stretches their formal academic education coursework over their lifetime, the licensee will only get to claim their formal academic education courses for perhaps two to three license renewals. Perhaps another renewal period can be claimed if the state allows some carryover of continuing education hours.

Unless a licensee with a master's degree or doctorate develops amnesia or dementia, the licensee with formal academic degrees will retain a significant portion of the knowledge from their formal education throughout their professional career. Continuing education regulations

should recognize this achievement and give life-time credit for academic education achievements.

I offer four reasons to permit academic education achievements to allow for life-time credit for continuing education.

First, if continuing education is meant to foster professional development, individuals with academic degrees, especially advanced academic degrees, have achieved professional development and knowledge well beyond the typical licensee.

Second, the licensee that has pursued and obtained academic degrees, especially advanced degrees, has shown a commitment for lifelong learning. The licensee will not likely put that commitment aside after completing the degree. The licensee will not need to be coerced to continue life-long learning.

Third, giving life-time credit for degree achievements will encourage licensees to have a focused approach toward meeting continuing education requirements. Completed academic courses that can be used toward a degree and also substitute for continuing education throughout a licensee's lifetime means that time and money spent on course work will save the licensee time and money later.

Finally, recognition of academic degrees for continuing education will encourage licensees to obtain degrees. States that have no degree requirements for licensure will encourage surveyors to obtain a degree by awarding life-time continuing education credit for a degree. All states can encourage licensees to obtain an advanced degree by permitting life-time credit for advanced academic education culminating in a degree.

I will add that many states already couple academic degrees with experience requirements. Those individuals seeking licensure with formal academic degrees often have to show less experience in order to obtain licensure.

Having given reasons for life-time continuing education credit for academic degrees, I now offer advice by suggesting regulations to be adopted using the same or similar wording as follows:

Licensees with at least thirty credit hours of surveying or related course work and a bachelor of science degree may waive half the continuing education requirements for renewal of licensure for every renewal period. (Note any bachelor of science degree with ABET accreditation in surveying, geomatics, or similar title will be presumed to meet the requirement of thirty credit hours.)

Licensees with a master of science degree along with forty-five credit hours in surveying or related course work may waive three-fourth of the continuing education requirements for renewal of licensure for each renewal period. (Undergraduate and graduate surveying or related course work is counted toward the forty-five credits.)

Licensees with a doctorate degree along with sixty credit hours in surveying or related course work may waive all continuing education requirements for renewal of licensure for each renewal period. (All undergraduate and graduate surveying or related course work is counted toward the sixty credits.)

I will close by suggesting that the appearance of a conflict of interest in advocating this recognition, is really not a conflict of interest if the reader delves into my life. Having lived to the age I find myself at, I recognize that I will be long dead before regulations are changed and

there would be an easing in continuing education requirements that could affect me because of the degrees I have.

† Other books and articles by Knud can be found at <https://umaine.edu/svt/faculty/hermansen-articles/>