

To: Faculty Senate

From: Undergraduate Council

Date: February 3, 2008

RE: Proposal – Under Graduate Credit Requirement Reduction

The Undergraduate Council recommends to the Senate that the minimum number of credits for an undergraduate degree be reduced to 120 from 128 for students admitted in Fall 2010 and after. We further recommend that the category “Upper Level Electives” be removed as a graduation requirement to accomplish this reduction.

During the last year, the Council has had lengthy discussions about this recommendation. We gathered information from other institutions both locally and nationally, and also from inside WPU.

Proposal: to lower the minimum number of credits required for graduation from 128 to 120.

**Whereas**: Student enrollment, retention and timely graduation is of utmost importance to student success

And

**Whereas**: Several of our sister institutions (Montclair State University, The College of New Jersey, Rowan University and Rutgers University) as well as several state university systems nationally have a minimum requirement of 120 credits.

And

**Whereas**: It is expected that because the GE curriculum will be revised in the near future and will include upper level electives within those requirements, now is the appropriate time to revisit the institution credit-wise requirement.

**Therefore be it resolved**: the Undergraduate Council recommends to the Senate that the upper level elective requirement be removed as a requirement category for graduation and that the minimum number of credits for an undergraduate degree be reduced to 120 from 128.

Rationale:

Marketability and Competitiveness

- Sister institutions now have 120 credits
- Transfer students, when evaluating potential institutions can base decision on credit requirements
- Collaboration with community college; contracted acceptance AA/AS

Retention

- Students are more likely to complete degree in a timely basis
- Change of major and transfer students trying to complete their degree requirements
- Gives the student great flexibility with course selection

Collaboration with New GE Program

- If the GE requirements are decreasing, it would give the students greater flexibility
- A move to 120 would not have a significant impact on the overall quality of the education
- With the GE requirements incorporated into the major
- Credits for completion of degree would reflect a credit reduction in GE and undergraduate requirements

## Budget

- Steve Boyai projected this would have minimal impact on the revenue, because of the flat rate of tuition

## Appendix - Rationale

Our recommendation is based upon the following: Student enrollment, retention, and timely graduation are of utmost importance to student success. We anticipate that a reduction in credits would increase our enrollment and retention, and allow students to complete their degrees in a timelier manner.

At the present time, several of our sister institutions, including Montclair State University, The College of New Jersey, Rowan University and Rutgers University, have a minimum requirement of 120 credits. The schools in NJ that have made this move are the ones with substantially increasing enrollments and reputations. Nation-wide, many institutions have moved to 120 credits including the CUNY system, the California State system, and the Minnesota state colleges system. When students – including both in-bound and out-bound transfer students as well as first time college students – make enrollment choices, they reportedly focus on the length of time it will take them to earn their degrees. The additional hours make us less competitive and prospective students more likely to select a different institution. We believe that this move may help stem our declining enrollment. Note: The Council communicated with Steve Bolyai who indicated that, while it is difficult to model the actual outcome, his current estimate is that this change would not have significant revenue effects for the University.

This sort of reduction in credit hours for graduation is one of the strategies AASC&U recommends to make a college education affordable to students. Currently, a number of our students stay for an additional semester to complete their degrees. Implementing this recommendation would allow those students to graduate earlier, with less debt. This move to 120 credits will also be in keeping with the mandates from the State Legislature to encourage degree completion in four years.

One of the issues that students face is the ability to carry a reasonable course load with time for in-depth study in the major. We feel that a 15-credit per semester load will allow students that time. We anticipate that this recommendation would have no influence upon current major requirements. Rather, the credit hour reduction could come from the current graduation requirement category called “Upper Level Electives.” We are, therefore, not advocating cuts in major requirements nor setting any mandates for the re-visioning efforts on a new GE program. If the courses in a 120 credit hour program are rigorous, this program will continue to provide a quality education for students.

This change will, as did the prior policy, set a “minimum” number of credits for graduation. Some programs have accreditation-based requirements in excess of that number. This recommended change will not have any impact on those programs.