

**CT BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

**RESOLUTION**

concerning

**Policy to Normalize Credit Hours for Associate and Baccalaureate Degree Programs**

**October 16, 2014**

**Whereas**, the Board of Regents believes that public postsecondary education institutions must be concerned with issues and practices affecting access and affordability; and

**Whereas**, the Board of Regents' efforts to advance affordability could be enhanced by the institutions normalizing the credit required for completing an associate and baccalaureate degree; and

**Whereas**, the Board of Regents recognizes that normalizing associate and baccalaureate degree credit hours may significantly reduce the time to obtain a degree for many students; and

**Whereas**, the Board of Regents endorses a rigorous system-wide review of academic programs to be undertaken in collaboration between the institution's president and chief academic officer to determine if there are any excess credit requirements within their degree programs; now

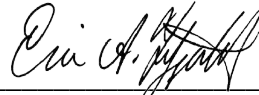
**Therefore, Be It Resolved** that the Board of Regents authorizes and instructs the ConnSCU System President to require each President and Chief Academic Officer of a college offering an Associate and/or a Baccalaureate degree to:

- 1) Develop and implement a review process for each Associate and Baccalaureate degree program with the goal of normalizing the number of credits at 60 and 120 credit hours respectively without compromising accreditation and certification requirements. The review should also include the identification of institution and department policies that might contribute to excess credit hours required for graduation.
- 2) The campus excess credit hour review process should include a multi-year phased strategy that allows for sufficient time for the campus review committees to thoroughly consider excess credit hours.
- 3) Provide compelling rationale to maintain Associate and/or Baccalaureate degree programs with more than 60 or 120 credit hours following the completion of a campus-based review. In addition to accreditation requirements extenuating circumstances might include industry requests, labs and first year experience programs.
- 4) Campus appeal to continue offering Associate and Baccalaureate degree programs with more than 60 or 120 credits respectively will be presented to the System President and Provost. Upon consultation with the Academic and Student Affairs Committee a final recommendation will be offered and forwarded to the Board of Regents.
- 5) Effective with the Board of Regents approval of this policy all new program proposals are expected to meet the 60 or 120 credit objective unless there is substantiating rationale for additional credits.
- 6) Develop a communication process so that students understand the consequences of taking credits beyond those required for graduation, and

**Be It Further Resolved** that each affected campus will present its findings and recommendations to the System President and the Board of Regents for the initial set of academic programs with excess credit hours no later than completion of the fall semester, December 2016, and;

**Be it Further Resolved** that approved recommendations to normalize Associate and Baccalaureate degree programs to 60 and 120 credits be implemented, no later than with the entering freshmen class for fall 2017 or the entering class of students appropriate for the campus.

A True Copy:



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Erin A. Fitzgerald, Secretary of the  
CT Board of Regents for Higher Education

**Item: Policy to Normalize Credit Hours for Associate and Baccalaureate Degree Programs****Background**

In the past few years, there have been extensive studies on the topic of excess credits and efforts to normalize associate and baccalaureate degree credit hours. The studies include: Complete College America, *Wasting Time: Costs, Consequences, and Causes of Excess Credits and Time to Degree*; Georgetown University report *The High Price of Excess Credits: How New Approaches Could Help Students and Schools*; and the State University System of Florida, Office of Academic Programs Review; *Hours to Graduation: A National Survey of Credit Hours Required for Baccalaureate Degrees*. These studies have documented wide disparities in academic credits for degree completion. All three reports identified the importance for system and institutional leadership to begin a systemic review of degrees' credit requirements.

Many states including North Carolina, Florida, Texas, Louisiana, Virginia and Arizona have enacted legislation to regulate excess credit hours. Some states including Florida and Louisiana have eliminated state funding for excess credit hours. Georgia is exploring options to limit excess credit hours and encourage timely graduation.

The Lumina Foundation and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) endorse the concept to reduce and eliminate excess credit hours. A Lumina report indicates "...the many reasons why students take excess credits and time to complete degree programs including change of majors, failing or withdrawing from courses, and working and attending school part-time. Other reasons have more to do with system, state or institutional policies, including degree requirements and transfer policies". A survey commissioned by Complete College America found that the number of credits required to complete a degree in many programs has increased over time. Among four-year degree programs, that trend has already begun to reverse itself, with many states and institutions pushing to return to the 120 credit norm. However, among two-year institutions the standard credit requirements still vary considerably. The Complete College America report goes on to state: "to improve completion and attainment rates, states, systems, and institutions can take action to make 120 credits the norm for a bachelor's degree and 60 credits the norm for an associate degree. There may be programs for which it makes sense to allow the requirements to exceed 120 or 60 credits, often because of accreditation, but the institutions should be required to make sound justification for those increased credit hours."

Reducing excess credit hours has the potential to provide multiple benefits to the student and the institution. These include:

1. Reducing excess credit hours may encourage timely graduation and allow students to enter the workforce more quickly, therefore increasing lifetime earning potential.
2. Reducing excess credit hours may reduce student cost.
3. Reducing excess credit hours may support increased collaboration between two and four year sector for the best practice for student transfer and articulation programs.
4. Reducing course sections that equate to excess credits may assist the institution to better manage classroom space.

Thus, it is appropriate for the Connecticut State College and University System and campus presidents and chief academic officers to consider the benefits to normalize associate degree programs to 60 credits and baccalaureate degree programs to 120 credits except in cases where accreditation requirements or other extenuating circumstances require additional credits for degree completion.

The recent Board of Regents approved policy for Academic Program Review provides context to assist the campus with the process to review academic programs. It is incumbent upon each campus to develop a strategy to either review each academic program for excess credits within the normal academic program review cycle or independent of the cycle for academic program review.

The campus based review should also take into consideration Board of Regents Transfer and Articulation policy. Where it makes sense the community colleges and the universities should seek agreement on the general education core courses for the majority of degree programs.

The process to review academic credit hours and to consider normalizing the number of credits for an associate and/or baccalaureate degree is campus-based and campus managed. The process should not infringe upon faculty governance or institutional management of the degree program, content, and curriculum. All decisions on curriculum and course content remain within the campus decision-making authority.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board of Regents consider approving the resolution.

5/14/2014 – Academic Council

10/2/2014 – Academic and Student Affairs Committee

10/16/2014 – Board of Regents