

**BRIEF**

**Information Item**

Agenda Item 4  
January 25-26, 2000

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY**

**Proposed Revision of Title 5 Regulations on Undergraduate Degrees**

**Presentation By**

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and Chief Academic Officer

**Summary**

An element of the Cornerstones Implementation Plan is the revision of Title 5 to reduce the minimum total units required for a bachelor's degree to 120 semester units (180 quarter units). Minor changes in the language governing undergraduate degrees are also proposed to make the constraints on the units required for different bachelor's degrees more comparable, where appropriate and consistent with campus practice in the CSU.

The proposed standards are being discussed with the CSU Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, the Academic Senate CSU, and the Executive Council. The revisions to Title 5 will be presented for action at a subsequent meeting this year.

## ITEM

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### COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

#### Proposed Revision of Title 5 Regulations on Undergraduate Degrees

##### Background

The first principle of Cornerstones declares, "The California State University will award the baccalaureate on the basis of demonstrated learning, as determined by our faculty." While in the long term, the assessment of learning in the CSU may be less tied to courses than it currently is at most university campuses, the awarding of credit units for the minimally satisfactory completion of a course remains the prevalent measure of student achievement in U.S. higher education.

The Governor's Budget Summary 1999-2000 stated, "The Governor believes UC and CSU must shorten the time it takes a student to graduate.... CSU must move to immediately reconcile its 124-unit graduation requirement with UC's 120-unit requirement." Current CSU policy, as embodied in Title 5 of the *California Code of Regulations*, requires that students earn at least 124 semester units (equivalent to 186 quarter units) to qualify for a bachelor's degree. This requirement has been in effect at least since the 1960s. The requirement is somewhat anomalous in light of the CSU's definition of a full-time equivalent student: one who is enrolled for fifteen units a term. Successful completion of four academic years of study at fifteen units per term would leave a student four semester units or six quarter units short of the total units required for graduation. That is, to graduate in four years, a student would have to enroll for more than a full-time equivalent course load for one or more terms. It is believed that the 124-unit requirement for graduation is linked to a four-unit physical education activity requirement that was imposed on CSU students in mid-century but which most CSU campuses no longer embrace.

U.S. institutions of higher education have long exhibited differences in the minimum unit requirement for graduation. For example, institutions in which full-time students are routinely expected to take four courses each semester typically require 32 or more courses for graduation; with each course identified by the institution as four semester units for purposes of comparison with other institutions, this requirement equates to 128 semester units. This type of requirement is especially common at liberal arts colleges (e.g., members of the Claremont Colleges, Amherst, Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr) but is also found at some universities (e.g., Duke). Universities for which the credit unit, not the course, is the primary measure of student workload are much more likely, however, to consider 120 semester units or equivalent the minimum units required for a baccalaureate degree. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges defines a BA or BS degree as "an undergraduate degree normally representing about four years (120 semester or 180 quarter units) of college study, or its equivalent in depth and quality of learning experience." The minimum unit requirement for a baccalaureate degree in the University of California is typically 120 semester or 180 quarter units. The CSU would be well within the bounds of common practice, in California and nationally, to make 120 semester units the minimum to be required for graduation.

With expanding knowledge bases and ever more sophisticated methods and tools, most fields of baccalaureate study have experienced pressure to include more courses and units in the undergraduate program, which extends students' time to degree. It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that an undergraduate education is rarely sufficient to prepare a graduate fully for life as a professional

and as a citizen. For the kinds of careers and lives that college graduates pursue, lifelong postsecondary learning—formal and informal—will almost certainly be required. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, four years after college graduation, 72 percent of the baccalaureate degree recipients who had *not* entered graduate education expected to earn a graduate degree during their careers. The Academic Senate CSU, in its study of baccalaureate education in the CSU, recognized this shift by emphasizing “knowledge and skills for lifelong intellectual endeavor”—those skills which graduates will find are “necessary to continue to learn throughout their lives.” If a baccalaureate degree should no longer be expected to be exhaustively comprehensive but to represent instead completion of one intermediate phase of an individual’s educational life, then balancing the pressure to incorporate additional areas of study within the baccalaureate program with the interest of students and the general public in expeditious completion of bachelor’s degree programs becomes less problematic.

With such considerations in mind, the Board of Trustees endorsed in March 1999 the Cornerstones Implementation Plan, which includes the following element:

The Board of Trustees will reduce the Title 5 baccalaureate degree unit requirement from 124 to 120 units. Each campus will re-examine the unit requirements for graduation and provide a monitoring system to ensure that acceptable justification is provided for all program requirements that extend the baccalaureate unit requirement beyond the normative minimum of 120 units.

### **Discussion**

The proposed Title 5 language generally retains the structure of the bachelor’s degrees currently authorized but establishes 120 semester units as the minimum required for any bachelor’s degree and encourages campuses to establish no greater total-unit requirement for a degree program than can be strongly justified. The language is analogous in its generality to the existing Title 5 section on the master’s degree. For greater consistency, some features of the existing Bachelor of Arts degree are formally extended to other bachelor’s degrees, as they are in practice on most CSU campuses.

### **Proposed Resolution**

The following resolution is recommended for adoption:

**RESOLVED**, By the Board of Trustees of The California State University, acting under the authority prescribed herein and pursuant to Section 89030.1 of the Education Code, that the board hereby amends its regulations in Article 6 of Subchapter 2 of Chapter 1, Division 5 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations as follows:

§ 40500.            ~~**Bachelor of Arts Degree: Required Curriculum.\***~~ **The Bachelor’s Degree.**

~~\*(This section applies to students who enter the curriculum on or after the commencement of the 1981-82 academic year.)~~

To be eligible for ~~the Bachelor of Arts~~ a bachelor's degree other than the Bachelor of Vocational Education degree, the candidate shall have completed the following requirements:

(a) General Education-Breadth Requirements and Requirements in United States History, Constitution and American Ideals. ~~The courses in~~ Courses taken to meet General Education-Breadth Requirements shall be distributed in the manner prescribed in Sections 40405-40405.4.

(b) Major.....24 semester units.

~~There shall be one major with a minimum of 24 semester units. At least 12 semester units in the major shall be upper division courses or their equivalent. The maximum number of units shall be determined by the campus. Each candidate shall complete a specified pattern of study approved as a major by the appropriate campus authority.~~

(1) A major leading to the Bachelor of Science degree shall incorporate a minimum of 36 semester units, including at least 18 semester units in upper-division courses or their equivalent.

(2) A major leading to the Bachelor of Architecture or Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree shall incorporate a minimum of 45 semester units, including at least 27 semester units in upper-division courses or their equivalent.

(3) A major leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree or other bachelor's degree not specified in subsection (1) or (2) shall incorporate a minimum of 24 semester units, including at least 12 semester units in upper-division courses or their equivalent.

(4) At least one-fourth of the units in a major leading to the Bachelor of Music or Bachelor of Fine Arts degree shall be devoted to theory, history, repertory, and criticism, as distinguished from studio, production, and performance.

(5) The maximum number of units in a major shall be determined by the campus.

(c) Minor. The campus may require a minor of candidates pursuing specified majors. A minor consisting of shall incorporate 12 or more semester units, of which including at least six must be in upper division credit, may be required semester units in upper-division courses or their equivalent.

(d) Additional Units. Units to complete the 124 total required for the degree may meet other requirements or be used as electives or to meet other requirements.

(e) Total semester units required for the Bachelor of Arts Degree, of which at least 40 shall be in the upper division credit.....124 semester units. A total of at least 120 semester units shall be required of each candidate, including at least 40 semester units in upper-division courses or their equivalent. Each campus shall establish and maintain a monitoring system to ensure that acceptable justification is provided for all program requirements that extend the baccalaureate unit requirement beyond the normative minimum of 120 units.

For each campus, this section shall be effective on the commencement of the 2000-01 academic year for all candidates except those who elect to meet previously established graduation requirements pursuant to Section 40401.

NOTE: Authority cited: Section 89030, Education Code. Reference: Section 89030, Education Code.

~~§ 40501. Bachelor of Science Degree: Required Curriculum.\*~~

~~\*(This section applies to students who enter the curriculum on or after the commencement of the 1981-82 academic year.)~~

~~To be eligible for the Bachelor of Science degree, the candidate shall have completed the following requirements:~~

~~(a) General Education-Breadth Requirements. The courses in General Education-Breadth Requirements shall be distributed in the manner prescribed in Sections 40405-40405.4.~~

~~(b) Major.....36 semester units:  
There shall be one major with a minimum of 36 semester units. At least 18 semester units in the major shall be upper division courses or their equivalent. The maximum number of units shall be determined by the campus.~~

~~(c) Total units required for the Bachelor of Science degree.....124 to 132 semester units:  
The number of semester units for each curriculum shall be determined by each campus within the limits of 124 to 132, except that 140 semester units may be required in engineering.~~

~~NOTE: Authority cited: Section 89030, Education Code. Reference: Section 89030, Education Code.~~

~~NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66600, 89030 and 89035, Education Code. Reference: Sections 66600, 89030 and 89221-89223, Education Code.~~

~~§ 40503. Bachelor of Vocational Education Degree\*~~

~~\*(This section applies to students who enter the curriculum on or after the commencement of the 1981-82 academic year.)~~

(a) Eligibility for Candidacy. Eligible candidates for this degree shall be limited to those vocational teachers who have been recommended by the Board of Examiners for Vocational Teachers and who meet the requirements established in the Education Code.

(b) Education Program. The educational program for each applicant candidate shall be have been determined by the campus in terms of accordance with the needs of the individual applicant candidate and the standards of the institution. A rigid pattern of subjects, and prerequisites except as they may be necessary to advanced courses, will not be required. Prerequisites will be required only as necessary for advanced courses.

(c) Requirements. Each applicant candidate for the degree shall have completed, with a grade point average of 2.0 (grade C) or better, except that only those courses in which a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) is assigned shall be used in computing the grade point average, a course of 124 120 semester units, including the credits recommended by the Board of Examiners, and shall have met the General Education-Breadth Requirements prescribed in Sections 40405-40405.4. The candidate shall have achieved a grade point average of 2.0 or better in those courses in which a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) was assigned.

(d) Major in Vocational Education. The credits recommended by the Board of Examiners for Vocational Teachers for the applicant's candidate's occupational, managerial, and supervisory experience shall be applied toward a major in vocational education.

(e) Credit for Vocational Teacher Training. The vocational teacher training completed by the applicant candidate may be used toward a minor in education or toward electives if some other minor is used as elective credit.

For each campus that is authorized to establish and maintain a curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Vocational Education degree, this section shall be effective on the commencement of the 2000-01 academic year for all candidates for the Bachelor of Vocational Education degree except those who elect to meet previously established graduation requirements pursuant to Section 40401.

NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66600, 89030 and 89035, Education Code.  
Reference: Sections 66600, 89030 and 89221-89223, Education Code.

NOTE:

**~~§ 40505. Bachelor of Architecture Degree: Required Curriculum.\*~~**

~~\*(This section applies to students who enter the curriculum on or after the commencement of the 1981-82 academic year.)~~

~~To be eligible for the Bachelor of Architecture degree, the candidate shall have completed the following requirements:~~

~~(a) General Education-Breadth Requirements. The courses in General Education-Breadth Requirements shall be distributed in the manner prescribed in Sections 40405-40405.4.~~

~~(b) Major.....45 semester units:~~

~~The major shall consist of a minimum of 45 semester units. At least 27 semester units in the major shall be in upper division courses or their equivalent. The maximum number of units shall be determined by each campus:~~

~~(c) Total units required for the Bachelor of Architecture degree.....165 to 175 semester units:~~

~~The total number of units required for the Bachelor of Architecture degree shall be distributed over a ten-semester period or equivalent:~~

~~NOTE: Authority cited: Section 89030, Education Code. Reference: Section 89030, Education Code.~~

~~§ 40506. Bachelor of Music Degree and Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree: Required Curriculum:~~

~~(This section applies to students who meet the requirements of Section 40401 and who enter the curriculum prior to the commencement of the 1981-82 academic year.)~~

~~To be eligible for either the Bachelor of Music degree or the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, the candidate shall have completed the following requirements:~~

~~a) General Education-Breadth Requirements, minimum 40 semester units. The courses in General Education-Breadth Requirements shall be distributed in the manner prescribed in Section 40405.~~

~~(b) Major—70 semester units. The major shall consist of a maximum of 70 semester units with at least one-fourth of these units devoted to theory and content as distinguished from studio, production, and performance.~~

~~(c) Total units required for the Bachelor of Music degree and the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree—132 semester units.~~

~~NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66600, 89030 and 89035 Education Code. Reference: Sections 66600 and 89030, Education Code.~~

~~§ 40506. Bachelor of Music Degree and Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree: Required Curriculum.\*~~

~~\*(This section applies to students who enter the curriculum on or after the commencement of the 1981-82 academic year.)~~

~~To be eligible for either the Bachelor of Music degree or the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, the candidate shall have completed the following requirements:~~

~~(a) General Education-Breadth Requirements. The courses in General Education-Breadth Requirements shall be distributed in the manner prescribed in Sections 40405-40405.4.~~

~~(b) Major—70 semester units. The major shall consist of a maximum of 70 semester units with at least one-fourth of these units devoted to theory and content as distinguished from studio, production, and performance.~~

~~(c) Total units required for the Bachelor of Music degree and the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.....132 semester units.~~

~~NOTE: Authority cited: Section 89030, Education Code. Reference: Section 89030, Education Code.~~

~~§ 40507. Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Degree: Required Curriculum.\*~~

~~To be eligible for the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree, the candidate shall have completed the following requirements:~~

~~(a) General Education-Breadth Requirements. The courses in General Education-Breadth Requirements shall be distributed in the manner prescribed in Sections 40405-40405.4.~~

~~(b) Major.....45 semester units.~~

~~The major shall consist of a minimum of 45 semester units, exclusive of those courses used to meet General Education-Breadth Requirements. At least 27 semester units in the major shall be in upper division courses or their equivalent. The maximum number of units shall be determined by each campus.~~

~~(c) Total units required for the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree—155 to 165 semester units. The total number of units required for the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree shall be distributed over a ten-semester period or equivalent.~~

~~NOTE: Authority cited: Section 89030, Education Code. Reference: Section 89030, Education Code.~~

And, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the Board of Trustees has determined that the adoption of the proposed revision will not impose a cost or savings on any state agency; will not impose a cost or savings on any local agency or school district that is required to be reimbursed under Section 17561 of the Government Code; will not result in any cost or savings in federal funding to the state; and will not impose a mandate on local agencies or school districts; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That the Board of Trustees delegates to the chancellor of the California State University authority to further adopt, amend, or repeal this revision if the further adoption, amendment, or repeal is required and is nonsubstantial or solely grammatical in nature, or sufficiently related to the original text that the public was adequately placed on notice that the change could result from the originally proposed regulatory action.