

SPECIAL REPORT
of the
RULES COMMITTEE
concerning
**THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN
AD HOC COMMITTEE TO BE CALLED
THE JOINT TASK FORCE
ON CURRICULUM, CREDITS AND COSTS**

Adopted unanimously by the Rules Committee,
acting on behalf of the Faculty Senate,
January 4, 2011

Presented at the
702nd Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
February 3, 2011

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

William Richards Adrion
Joseph Bartolomeo, Chair
Joseph Berger
Marilyn Billings
D. Anthony Butterfield
Mari Castañeda
Alexandrina Deschamps
Ernest May
W. Brian O'Connor

Introduction

The minutes of the 701st meeting of the Faculty Senate, on December 14, 2010, contain the following discussion and motion:

C. NEW BUSINESS

1. Special Report of the Academic Matters, General Education and Undergraduate Education Councils concerning Academic Regulations regarding Maximum Credit Load for a Full-Time Student, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 11-028 with Motion No. 28-11.

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve changing the maximum credit load for a semester policy from “17 to 19,” as currently worded, to a maximum credit load for a semester of 19 credits, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 11-028. This is designed primarily to meet the needs of upper division students. In addition, departments, schools and colleges wishing a higher or lower maximum will be required to submit a proposal requesting such approval, unless such a higher or lower maximum has been previously approved.

John Jenkins, Chair of the Academic Matters Council, while introducing the motion, noted that the process behind this motion reminded him of what we often hear happening in the United States Congress. What begins as a seemingly simple issue gathers momentum and energy, becoming extremely complex. Many of our academic programs—three fourths of those on campus—have increased their credit limits above 18. This allows students within those programs to register for that amount of credits at the time of registration. Only about eight percent of the students at UMass want to take more than 18 credits, but some students among that eight percent are not in one of those favored departments, and they must wait until after they have registered for other courses and receive approval from an advisor before registering for more than 18 credits. By that time, many of the courses they wished to enroll in have been filled—especially if those are General Education courses. This is exacerbated by the fact that many Gen Ed courses are now 4 credits. This is seen by the Academic Matters Council as an issue of fair access for students, and Professor Jenkins encouraged expedition in handling this process and to keep in mind that the primary goal of this motion is equal access to academic opportunities. In lieu of discussion, Professor Jenkins, on behalf of the Academic Matters Council, invited a counter proposal to address these issues.

Senator Bartolomeo presented a counter proposal, referring the matter back to the Rules Committee. The Committee discovered in the discussions surrounding this issue that there were many complexities that need to be resolved before a blanket policy is adopted. The Rules Committee and the administration have agreed to set up a Joint Task Force on Curriculum, Credits and Cost which would work expeditiously and report back to the Faculty Senate with a recommendation by the end of the Spring 2011 semester. In the meantime, the current policy would continue, but any unit, department, school or college that wished to adjust their credit limit would, as under current policy, have the right to do so. Senator Bartolomeo moved that this proposal be moved back to the Rules Committee.

The motion to refer this issue back to the Rules Committee, which in turn will report back to the Faculty Senate by the end of the Spring 2011 semester, was seconded and adopted.

This special report is the Rules Committee’s response to the Faculty Senate’s motion to create an Ad Hoc Committee to be called the Joint Task Force on Curriculum, Credits and Costs, to further deliberate Sen. Doc. No. 11-028 and related matters.

Charge

The Joint Task Force on Curriculum, Credits and Costs shall:

1. Study practices regarding undergraduate education at peer institutions with respect to:
 - a. maximum credit load;
 - b. mechanisms for approving exceptions to the maximum credit load;
 - c. mechanisms for assuring fairness for students in gaining access to seats in courses, which are a limited resource;

- d. extra charges for credit overload;
 - e. differential tuition;
 - f. such other matters relating to curriculum, credits, and costs as may be deemed appropriate and relevant.
2. Make policy recommendations regarding undergraduate education to the Faculty Senate of the University of Massachusetts Amherst with respect to:
- a. maximum credit load;
 - b. mechanisms for approving exceptions to the maximum credit load;
 - c. mechanisms for assuring fairness for students in gaining access to seats in courses, which are a limited resource;
 - d. extra charges for credit overload;
 - e. differential tuition;
 - f. implications of the new 4-credit norm in the General Education curriculum;
 - g. such other matters relating to curriculum, credits, and costs as may be deemed appropriate and relevant.

The Joint Task Force shall provide a progress report or a final report to the Faculty Senate by the final meeting of the Spring 2011 semester, at the latest.

The Joint Task Force shall remain authorized until its final report is received by the Faculty Senate, or for a maximum duration of 3 years.

Membership

1. The Chancellor or a designee
2. The Provost or a designee
3. The Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance or a designee
4. The Deputy Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education
5. The Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Assessment
6. The University Registrar
7. The Assistant Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Advising and Learning Communities
8. A Member of the Deans Council, appointed by the Provost
9. Two Members of the Undergraduate Deans Council, appointed by the Provost
10. The Secretary of the Faculty Senate or a designee
11. The Chair of the Rules Committee or a designee
12. The Chair of the Academic Matters Council or a designee
13. The Chair of the General Education Council or a designee
14. The Chair of the Program and Budget Council or a designee
15. The Chair of the Undergraduate Education Council or a designee
16. Two Faculty Members at large, selected by the Rules Committee
17. The Student Trustee or a designee
18. The President of the Student Government Association or a designee

Chairperson

The Chairperson (or Co-Chairpersons) shall be selected by the Provost, subject to the consent of the Rules Committee.

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve the Establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee to be called the Joint Task Force on Curriculum, Credits and Costs (as amended), as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 11-035B.