



Reduced Hour Business Degree Programs – Guidelines and Implications

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Southwestern Business Deans' Association

- ▶ Today we are looking at one of the biggest disruptions in modern U.S. higher education: the structural shift from a four-year bachelor's degree to a different type of three-year model.

Let's compare the models

- ❖ Traditional Model: Requires **120 credits** across **4 years** (General Ed, Major, and Electives).
- ❖ Three-Year Model: Reduces **time to degree** by accelerating the pace or course load of the traditional **120 credit hour** bachelor's degree
- ❖ Reduced Hour Model: Reduces the **time to degree** & reduces the **credit hours needed** to complete the degree

Why now? The Driving Forces

- The Affordability Crisis
- Enrollment Cliff
- Urgent workforce demands in specific areas

Why now? The Driving Forces

- Critical Workforce Shortage:
By the year **2030**, the global workforce is projected to experience a profound structural transformation. Rather than widespread job loss due to Artificial Intelligence (AI), **the core challenge of 2030 will be an unprecedented, systemic global talent shortage.**

Other Factors in the Workforce Shortfall

The compounding impact of **Baby Boomer retirements** and **plummeting birth rates** is the **primary structural driver** of the projected **2030** talent shortage. Economists describe this intersection as a "**demographic pincer movement**" that is permanently shrinking the available labor pool.

By The Numbers...

There are three core elements:

- Goodbye Boomers: 73 million retirees
- Velocity of the Loss: 10,000 to 11,400 a day
- Participation Drop: By 2030 - U.S. labor force participation rate 62% to ~ 58% by 2030

The Concealed Reason..

- Offshoring of industry boomed in the 1990s and early 2000s
- Export of jobs / domestic pipeline for technical training & generational knowledge transfer
- Massive "skills gap" created

Additionally...

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Reshoring
- The intersection of AI + Reshoring

Potential shift in the global economy could impact global power structures.

Pioneers of the “3-Year” (Reduced Credit) Model

Slowly at first:

- Johnson and Wales University
- Ensign College
- BYU Idaho

- College-in-3 Exchange, Inc.
(approx. 50 member institutions)

Today:

Accreditors have facilitated room for innovation and new models.

SACSCOC one of the first to assemble a peer committee to design **policy** for a 3-Year (or reduced-credit) program for their membership.

Some states are beginning to issue mandate language to require public institutions to create 3-year programs.

Curriculum Models

Many models, including:

- Preserve the core general education courses
- Completely rethinking the program
- Mapping student learning outcomes

Important to consider how to provide a **pathway back into a traditional baccalaureate**, if the student desires a traditional baccalaureate later.

Anticipated Advantages

- Financial benefit to students
- Higher retention and completion rates
- Moves students into the workforce faster

Anticipated Drawbacks, Challenges, & Criticisms

- Longstanding classification of institutions
- Shortening the "College Experience"
- Narrower Scope
- May create a two-tiered system

Anticipated Drawbacks, Challenges, & Criticisms

- ▶ Tracking of students into rigid pathways:
 - Minimal room to change majors without adding semesters and financial penalties
 - Less opportunity for internships
 - Unclear articulation into traditional bachelor's degree
 - Uncertain impact on graduate school admissions

Anticipated Drawbacks, Challenges, & Criticisms

- ▶ Loss of institutional revenue (tuition, room/board) and impact on business school budget
- ▶ Possible oversupply of job applicants for industry
- ▶ Potential distinction in graduates' salaries

Big Questions:

- Graduate programs
- Employers
- Value of traditional baccalaureate in U.S.:
 - student's exposure to critical thinking
 - creative problem solving
 - citizenship
 - volunteerism
 - philanthropy

Study the Impact

Set goals such as:

- student learning outcomes
- pass rates
- number of graduates
- cost of the degree for students
- loss of college income
- job placement
- student satisfaction

Then collect the data and study the impact

SACSCOC Development
of
Guidelines and Policies
for
Reduced Hour Degree Programs

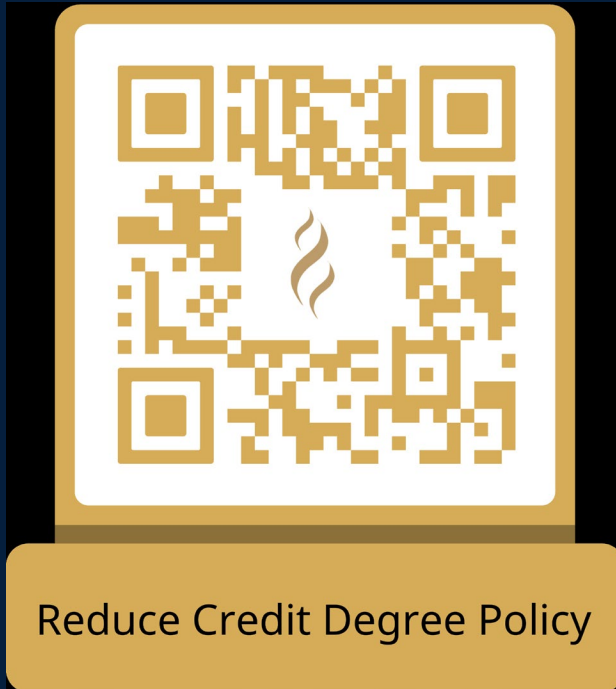
Concerns of Ad Hoc Peer Committee

- Transparency
- Transcripts
- Articulation
- “Select” majors or disciplines connected to workforce needs

High Demand Fields

- Healthcare
- Manufacturing & Trades
- Professional & Advanced Tech
- Others....

Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs



SACSCOC Substantive Change

NEW POLICY!

Reduced Credit Undergraduate Degrees



Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

- ▶ **Bachelors Degrees
>89 / <120 credits**
- ▶ **New Program
Approval REQUIRED**



Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

▶ What to Submit

- ▶ New Program Approval prospectus
- ▶ Plus+
- ▶ Supporting documentation

Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

▶ What to Submit: Plus+

- ▶ Program name
- ▶ Appropriate to discipline / workforce
- ▶ Student learning outcomes
- ▶ Curricular breadth and depth
- ▶ Communication with stakeholders
- ▶ Assessment

Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

Program Name

- ▶ **Must include a modifier** before the word, bachelors or baccalaureate in order to make it clear to the public students, and their parents that this is not a traditional baccalaureate



Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

Appropriate to Discipline/Workforce

- ▶ Relationship to workforce needs
- ▶ Justification of reduced-credit degree as appropriate to mission and goals



Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

Student Learning Outcomes

- ▶ Clear
- ▶ Consistent with content
- ▶ How they will be applied and assessed



Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

Curricular Breadth and Depth

- ▶ Provide rationale and evidence of thoughtful and intentional program design
- ▶ Address reduced general education/electives
- ▶ Demonstrate comparable general education knowledge and skills



Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

Communication with Shareholders

- ▶ Provide draft language/announcement
- ▶ Public and transparent
- ▶ Warnings about job/graduate school acceptance



Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

Assessment

In addition to Student Learning Outcomes assessment, identify metrics and assessment of program impact, such as:

- ▶ Student debt
- ▶ Retention rates
- ▶ Graduation rates
- ▶ Employment data
- ▶ Student satisfaction

Reduced Credit Hour Degrees

FAQ

Reduced Credit Hour Undergraduate Programs

Recent SACSCOC Approvals

- ▶ University of Lynchburg
- ▶ University of Mary Hardin Baylor
- ▶ Our Lady of the Lake University

Thank you to SACSCOC colleagues!

Dr. Sandra Jordan, Chief of Staff/VP

Dr. Michelle Madden, Director of Substantive Change



Questions?

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