

Regulations on Improving Graduation Rates

In response to legislation enacted by the General Assembly in 1992, the Board of Governors has adopted a *Plan to Improve Graduation Rates in The University of North Carolina*. The plan includes policies that are aimed at decreasing the average time taken for completion of degrees and measures to assess the effectiveness of these policies. This memorandum lists the policies and measures adopted by the board and provides instructions to be followed by the constituent institutions in complying with these policies.

I. University-Wide Policies

1. Undergraduate students are expected to enroll in at least 15 semester hours credit per term. Thus it should be possible for a full-time student to complete most baccalaureate degree programs within four academic years or the equivalent (eight semesters of full-time study). Effective Fall 1995, baccalaureate degree programs shall be limited to no more than 128 semester hours. Any semester hour requirement beyond 128 must be approved by the Board of Governors. Any program authorized by the Board of Governors to require 135 semester hours or more shall be officially designated as a five-year baccalaureate program. Requests for an exception to the 128 hour limitation for existing programs shall be submitted to the Board of Governors by Fall, 1994.

Institutions will review baccalaureate degree program graduation requirements while preparing their plan to improve graduation rates (item 5). The plan is due January 10, 1994. By July 1, 1994, institutions shall submit to the President requests for approval of any existing degree programs for which a semester hour requirement in excess of 128 hours is proposed. These requests will be reviewed by staff and submitted to the planning committee of the Board of Governors in the fall of 1994. The requests should follow the format prescribed on the attachment to this memorandum

2. In all institutional catalogs and also in orientation materials for parents and students, the normal number of hours and length of time required to attain the baccalaureate degree will be prominently displayed along with a description of the factors that may extend the length of time to successful completion of the degree for individual students.

Institutions shall include this information in the next revision of their catalogs and in orientation materials. Copies of the text, when published, should be sent to General Administration (either with the institutional plan submitted in January 1994, or later, if changes have not been made by that time).

3. The University will sponsor one or more conferences for faculty on successful strategies to increase graduation rates and reduce length of time to degree.

General Administration will plan a conference and will consult with the constituent institutions regarding the selection of faculty participants.

4. The Board of Governors in future budgets will support reasonable increases in resources for on-campus employment of students.

General Administration will include a request in the next budget cycle.

5. During 1993, each of the constituent institutions shall adopt a plan for improving four-year graduation rates and shortening the average time taken to graduate. The plan shall incorporate the policies stated in items 1 and 2, above, and include, but not be limited to, a review of campus policies and practices that may affect graduation rates and time to graduate, with particular attention to the following:

- a. review baccalaureate degree program graduation requirements to ensure that all programs comply with the semester hour limitations stated in policy 1, above;

- b. review course schedules for the past three years to determine whether all courses required for graduation are offered on a timely basis and with an adequate number of sections and, where inadequacies are discovered, take steps to correct them;
- c. review the availability of appropriate and timely academic advisement, especially at the freshman level, to assist students in making effective decisions, to increase the potential for students selecting appropriate courses and schedules, to provide students with assistance in selecting a major at the appropriate time in order to reduce excessive changes of majors, and to increase student awareness of the importance for traditional students of enrolling in at least 15 semester hours per semester in order to complete the degree in eight semesters;
- d. review policies and practices governing course withdrawal, course repeat, progression, suspension, and reinstatement policies to ensure that such policies are not encouraging and facilitating behaviors that lengthen time to graduation;
- e. review the specification of courses within majors to determine whether excessive or unnecessary specification or augmentation of general education course for certain majors is increasing course requirements for students changing majors;
- f. review higher than general institutional grade point average requirements for admission to a major or satisfaction of grade requirements in major courses to ensure that these requirements are not leading students to reduce course loads or to repeat courses unnecessarily, thereby lengthening time to graduation;
- g. review financial aid policies to ensure that students are aware of opportunities for financial aid and that policies do not encourage part-time or prolonged enrollment.

Each institution shall submit a report to the President by January 10, 1994, that summarizes its findings and the corrective actions being taken or to be taken. Thereafter, each institution shall report on its progress in its annual assessment reports.

This report should indicate what was reviewed, what the findings were, and what corrective actions have been taken. To assist institutions in their review of baccalaureate degree program semester hour requirements, General Administration will prepare a report on *Distribution of Cumulative Credit Hours Earned by Baccalaureate Recipients in 1987-88 through 1991-92 by Major Field*. This will be an updated version of the report used by institutions in 1991-92 to review length of time to degree by major field.

The instructions for future institutional assessment reports will remind institutions to include a report on their progress in fulfilling their respective plans.

II. Measures of Progress and Success

1. The University has developed a monitoring process that enables it to track the length of time to degree for both full-time and part-time students. This report will be produced annually. Institutions will respond to it by reporting on their progress in improving graduation rates and reducing time to degree in their annual reports on institutional assessment.

General Administration will produce these reports annually and remind institutions to respond to them in their annual reports on institutional assessment.

2. The University will use the quadrennial baccalaureate graduate survey to ask graduates how long they took to complete the baccalaureate degree and, if longer than four years, why. The results of this survey will be available in the winter of 1993 and will be analyzed by institutions in their 1994 reports on institutional assessment.

This question will be included in the next baccalaureate graduate survey. Institutions will analyze the responses in their 1994 reports on institutional assessment.

Please submit 5 copies of the following by the date indicated:

Institutional Plan to Improve Graduation Rates	January 10, 1994
Copies of catalog text and orientation materials on length of time to degree (when published)	January 10, 1994 (with Grad. Rates Plan)
Requests for Approval of Baccalaureate Degree Programs in Excess of 128 Semester Hours	July 1, 1994

[This is a rewrite of Administrative Memorandum #331.]

The University of North Carolina

**Request for Approval of a Baccalaureate Degree Program/Track
Requiring in Excess of 128 Semester Hours**

Instructions: All requests for approval of existing baccalaureate degree programs or tracks with semester hour requirements in excess of 128 hours must follow the format below. Five copies of each request should be submitted by July 1, 1994. The same information should be provided with requests to establish new programs or tracks, if proposed degree requirements would be in excess of 128 hours.

Date: _____

Constituent Institution: _____

API Discipline Specialty Title: _____

API Specialty Number: _____

Program Track Title: _____

1. Total semester hours required in this degree program/track in 1990-91: _____ s.h.

2. Total semester hours currently required in this degree program/track: _____ s.h.

3. Total semester hours proposed for this degree program/track: _____ s.h.

General Studies: _____ s.h.

Major: _____ s.h.

Free Electives: _____ s.h.

Other (identify, e.g.,
required minor,
2nd major, etc.): _____ s.h.

4. Provide a justification for requiring in excess of 128 semester hours. Are proposed requirements related to professional accreditation standards?

5. Indicate the probable impact on students in this program/track who wish to graduate in four years if approval is granted for semester hour requirements in excess of 128 hours.

Chancellor: _____