

128 Credit Hour Taskforce Redux

Report, December 2015

Committee Work

The committee, consisting of Gabriel Barreneche, Steve Booker, Gloria Cook, Mario D'Amato, Margot Fadool, Meribeth Huebner, Toni Holbrook, Karla Knight, Caroline Nason, Tim Pett, Paul Stephenson, and Claire Strom, met biweekly during fall 2015.

Accomplishments

- Members first determined that Rollins undergraduate programs should not transition to a standard 3-semester-hour class basis unless a new, compelling reason developed.
- Second, members developed an effective way of justifying the 4-semester-hour standard course basis and refined the current mechanism for assessing actual student hours worked per course. At the time of this writing, these recommendations are under review by the appropriate faculty governance committees.

The committee then considered moving the Rollins undergraduate degree to 128 hours. Members' observations appear below.

Moving to 128

- It should be fairly easy for the A&S|CPS undergraduate programs to move to 128 credits for the bachelor's degree. Only two A&S|CPS majors, Chemistry and Education, currently have too many credit hours to fall under 128 requirement.
- Chemistry could choose to adopt a model used in other schools where some of the classes required for graduate education are offered separate from the chemistry major. Theoretically, this will work. However, since the bulk of our chemistry majors intend to attend graduate school, it is somewhat disingenuous.
- Education has already developed a plan to move to 128. If required by the College they would eliminate courses in teaching the arts and teaching physical education. In addition, students would receive less credit hours for completing the mandatory student teaching semester.
- Once the majors are adjusted, the transition to 128 becomes solely bureaucratic and technological and should be easy to accomplish within one year.

Pros

- Pedagogically, the most important advantage of transitioning to 128 hours is that students will be able to take four (4) courses a semester to graduate. Hopefully, doing so will allow all Rollins College instructors to more realistically expect the 7.5 hours of weekly outside-of-class work that is intended for every course meeting 150 minutes per week and receiving four (4) semester hours of credit.

- Moving to 128 hours puts us in line with our peer and aspirant schools (see attachment).
- Reducing the number of credit hours to graduate might help to improve our four- and six-year graduation rates.

Cons

- Moving to 128 will be difficult for the Holt School, which bills by semester credit hours (see attached report).
- Adding one or two required careers classes (at one or two credits each) will be much harder at 128 credits than at 140.

Other Observations

- Originally, it was assumed that moving to 128 would allow the College to reduce its use of adjuncts. This would save money, which, it was argued, would pay for the implementation of the 5+ faculty load model. Unfortunately, the real effect of the reduction on staffing needs is much less clear, being confounded by factors including course releases, the new general education system, and the number of courses and number of students in any given major.
- Moving to 128 might make us more competitive in terms of admissions, nearly all of the College's peer and aspirant institutions have degree requirements in this range (see attached) however, the Admissions Office has no data to support this assertion.
- The new rFLA curriculum reduced the number of classes required for graduation by three (3.5), approximately 14 semester hours. This reduction was intended partially to encourage students to explore, or add minors or second majors. If we reduce the number of courses to graduate by three (3), that argument is moot.
- Some departments have reduced the number of classes needed to complete their majors. This should allow students more freedom to explore other academic areas, even if we transition to 128. However, the reduction is not universal.