

State of California  
M e m o r a n d u m



*San Luis Obispo, California*

**To:** Deans  
Associate Deans  
Department Heads/Chairs  
Chair, Academic Senate  
Chair, Curriculum Committee

**Date:** October 22, 2001

**From:** Paul J. Zingg  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Cc:** Warren Baker  
W. David Conn  
Linda Dalton  
Jerry Hanley  
Euel Kennedy

**Subject:** Reduction of Minimum Number of Units Required for  
Baccalaureate Degree

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At its meeting on July 18-19 2000, acting on a provision in the 1999 Cornerstones Implementation Plan, the CSU Board of Trustees passed a resolution reducing the Title 5 baccalaureate degree minimum unit requirement from 124 to 120 semester units (186 to 180 quarter units) for students meeting graduation requirements established during or after the 2000-2001 academic year. In his Budget Summary 1999-2000, the Governor had urged such a move, which is consistent with the definition of a BA or BS degree employed by the Western Association of Colleges & Schools, and reconciles the graduation unit requirements of the CSU and the UC.

Consistent with wording in the Cornerstones Implementation Plan, the Trustees' resolution states that "each campus shall establish and maintain a monitoring system to ensure that justification is provided for all program requirements that extend the baccalaureate unit requirement beyond 120 units" (i.e., 180 quarter units). The accompanying documentation also states: "It is understood that baccalaureate unit requirements are to be reviewed on campuses by the faculty in the course of regularly scheduled program reviews."

The Chancellor and his staff have made it very clear to President Baker and myself that they expect the provisions of this resolution, which is legally binding, to be implemented by all CSU campuses in a timely manner. In the annual update to our Academic Plan that we are required to submit to the Chancellor's Office, we will henceforth be expected to report on our progress toward implementation. We understand that other campuses such as Sacramento State U, San Francisco State U, San Jose State U, CSU Chico, CSU Long Beach, CSU Northridge, and CSU San Bernadino have already started to graduate students meeting the new unit minimum.

At Cal Poly, we do not believe that it is reasonable to delay full implementation of the Trustees' resolution until the end of the next five-year cycle of program reviews, which has been delayed because of the transition to a new program review process. **Rather, it is our intention to implement the resolution in such a manner that any resulting curricular changes can be developed and approved by the faculty in time for inclusion in the 2005-2007 Catalog at the latest.** This means that programs

may wait until their next regularly scheduled program reviews only if these will occur within the next two years; otherwise, they must find an earlier opportunity to re-examine their unit requirements (e.g., during the process of curriculum review that is beginning this quarter, in preparation for development of the 2003-2005 Catalog).

We recognize that reducing the minimum number of units required for graduation will have implications for student throughput and, consequently, enrollment. Such implications will be taken into account in enrollment planning for those programs that make a reduction.

The Chancellor's Office has left it to individual campuses to develop their own criteria for justifying unit requirements in excess of the new minimum. I invite input on criteria to be used at Cal Poly and expect that the Academic Senate will wish to take this matter up (presumably in the Curriculum Committee). In order to assist those wanting to move quickly in reviewing their curricula, it is important that the criteria be developed and agreed upon without delay.

In the meantime, some programs may choose to initiate action immediately to reduce their graduation unit requirements to the new CSU minimum, particularly when this can be accomplished through the elimination of free electives that exceed the 9 quarter units minimum required by Senate resolution for all programs. It should be noted that, to the best of our knowledge, the Trustees have no immediate plans to adjust the number of units required for General Education under Title V.

Accordingly, I request that you proceed within the next two years to re-examine your curricula with a view *either* to reducing to 180 the number of quarter units required to graduate *or* to developing a convincing justification for requiring some number of units in excess of this new minimum.