

Thank you to the faculty who took on an enormous project by joining the task force. I appreciate the reports very much and found they addressed many of the issues I had and introduced thoughtful discussion of issues that were new to me.

Surprisingly, I did not find myself persuaded by either report in a way that makes me feel like I know the “best” way to vote on this issue. And in some ways the facts and figures raised subsequent questions for me. I know that I can survive in the current model, thus before I vote to move into uncharted waters I’d like to be sure that certain issues are clear to me. So I’m writing this eMail with questions/issues that I thought would have been explored by the reports (and may have been, but I missed them).

Please understand that I went to school where I took only four classes per semester and I’ve always felt that our students would be better served with such a schedule (at least, to reflect the good points of the minority report, those students who would take advantage of the benefits). At this point, though, I’m still concerned.

My first few questions focus on the claim made by the Majority Report that if we can attain a faculty size of 213, then each of us on average should teach 81 students instead of 100; or if we can’t achieve such a size of the faculty that with a faculty of 200 we could move to the 4-credit model just by increasing class size by 2.

1. Hiring New Faculty. The Majority Report states that for our current population we need 200 and in the new model we would need 213, thus “we would need 13 new full-time faculty to meet the needs of a 4-credit model.” (22)

Q1. Do we already have that 200? If I recall the Provost’s report correctly, a few meetings ago, the Administration stated that currently we are about 20 faculty shy of where we “should” be; that by hiring an extra 5-or-so (?) lines per year for the next several years the Administration will eventually get us to the point where “faculty workload” has been addressed in a way that will make our University lives better. Thus if we already are 20 lines shy, how will moving to a curriculum that makes us immediately 33 lines shy be “good” for workload issues while those lines are slowly (?) filled. And, of course, does the Administration have the resources to hire 33 lines above what we have now? Will it have to wait for more SIPPs/retirements? If so, what will happen if the economy discourages retirements over the next few years when 4-credits is in effect?

Q2. Shouldn’t we get a commitment from the Administration before voting on this that they will bring us to a certain number of tenure-track and contract faculty? I feel right now that I don’t know where we stand relative to the number used in the report (200) and where the Administration has promised us we’ll end-up regardless of the 4-credit vote (Bernier’s faculty meeting presentation) and where the Administration stands on hiring “an additional 13” lines should we move to 4-credits.

2. Increasing Class Size. The Majority Report states that “Adjusting average class sizes is not a significant deterrent to the 4-credit model.” (22)

Q3. Shouldn't this statement have some evidence supporting it concerning room capacities?

a. I know that my classes in Rounds 304, 307, 309, and 107, and Memorial 010, and Boyd 001 have been at-capacity – you'd need to breakdown walls to get those two seats in.

b. I don't know about the rest of campus, but Rounds classrooms have been given fire-code capacities even lower than that which I taught before the plaques appeared on the door frames reducing the size of my class. How do we get around fire codes?

c. Some of my classes have been large (50ish) and some have been small (20 ish); how does increasing each class “by two” work here – by 4 in my 50ish class?

Q4. “average class size” sounds too general. Back in September, 2006, I raised this issue, challenging John Kulig's math calculations on the “PSC-Faculty” listserv discussing 4-credits. At first Dennis Machnik defended the math, but after he considered the specific example I presented (on EN 1200/Composition) he wrote that actually I was correct: “You are right. The math was very oversimplified. Composition itself would become a 4 credit course, requiring a third more material. And a third more instructors to maintain the cap. My model was averaged over all courses, as a first approximation. Composition is only one of many courses in which more instructors will be needed, or the class size will increase. (11/27/06) [My apologies to the English Department for using their course for which, when writing in '06, it was easy to capture data.]

a. The math that I used had such classes having their class size increase by 20%. I'll re-post the calculation below so that I may be disabused if I've miscalculated or wrongly assumed something; also so that you can see from where this line of questioning is coming. This specific case, if correct, shows that being specific is going to be very important. While Wixon's tables show that 120 credits can be handled without significant increase to class size *overall*, I'd feel much more comfortable with concrete data and not theoretical data.

b. Are we at the same place as Keene? I was heartened by the majority report's quote from “Kirsti Sandy, a professor in the KSC English Department” who “said in an email: ‘We did not have to increase our cap for any course, as we had open seats at all levels each year.’” (20) But I'm not sure such a statement can be applied to us. Certainly in my recollection of the beginning of every semester for the past 5 years, my department has raised caps to make room for students – there weren't enough seats. (Hence the need for the Administration to hire those new faculty they promised, yes?) At least this is my sense of my department. A report concerning each department's current extra space would help guide me in my vote, as it could show that we are like Keene and have room for the change.

c. A report from each department aside, would those programs with “space” in the caps be able to take up the students excluded from the courses that cannot be over-packed? For example, I can imagine my colleagues in the history discipline deciding to repackage the history major in a 4-credit model in a way that might force some classes to be for majors/minors/teacher-cert. students only – by offering fewer courses, the major might need to be more structured. I currently teach upper-divisions that are (variously) Diversity, Writing, and Integrative. If I have to limit these to majors, where do the students who used to take my classes for Connections end

up? Equally important, where do students go for “free electives” if they’re cut out by the above scenario?

Q5. Involved Parties. The majority report involved every department, thankfully. It looked to me from the list that one person was from the Council of Teacher Certification, which I think was good because Teacher Certification and accredited education programs seem pretty vital to my understanding of the function of our University. Thus I’d really like to see a report from the Council of Teacher Education that they endorse a move to 4-credit. I would imagine that the various Teacher Cert programs could sketch-out how their curriculum would look (and maybe they did this and I missed it in the report). Related, I was struck by the report’s assertion that the trend in Teacher Cert programs is that “faculty can design courses and curricula that best meet how they define an educated person in their field.” (26) While I agree with this quote in the context it was written (that accrediting agencies do not dictate the content of courses), I worried that it was suggesting that our faculty don’t have to worry about creating a curriculum that meets requirements set by the State of NH and educational agencies. As I look within my own department I wonder how a SSTC major will combine very disparate ideas within discipline fields (world vs. US gov’t; physical vs. cultural geography; anthropology vs. sociology) and combine disparate disciplines (geography, history, polisci, an/so) and combine SS methods, and combine Educational requirements. Will 4 credits be the end of electives for education majors? What impact will their repackaged curricular have on the content courses that currently are infused into those programs? I imagine answers to these will combine with answers to classroom cap projections, and that will impact financial concerns related to hiring faculty and/or building spaces for room sizes.

Q6. Did the minority report have to suggest we wait 7 years should the 4-credit issue fail? While I understand its concern that Gen Ed was given a 7 year promise, wouldn’t that spirit equally be met with a prohibition focused on 2011 instead of 2015? And I hope the prohibition isn’t meant to be as strong as a “gag rule” for I would fear that should the minority position “win” that in 2015 people interested in 4-credit models will have to start from scratch instead of hit the ground running. I imagine that if the minority report’s motion kept the spirit of the Gen Ed ‘promise’ that it might actually be useful/helpful to all in 2011. It could encourage discussion of the 4-credit model with a target of 2011 (or earlier), have every program develop a sketch-of-a-model of what their curriculum would look like, run the last 4 years of student data through them to see what things would look like, and then draw a conclusion with hard evidence of what we would expect – and plan for those expectations.

Q7. Is a “yes” vote to move to 4-credit going to allow for the model I presented in Q6? If so and the model shows catastrophe, can we move slowly-rather-than-too-quickly?

Q8. If others felt my questions were worth answering before voting, could we work on getting these answers over the next half of this semester, the summer, and early Fall – and have our vote in the fall?

With respect to all the parties involved, and with thankfulness for all the hard work they put into their reports,
John

+-----Original Message-----

+From: Dennis Machnik [<mailto:dennisma@mail.plymouth.edu>]

+Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2006 7:30 AM

+To: jkrueckeberg@mail.plymouth.edu

+Subject: RE: [Psc-faculty] Credit Model Task Force

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+You are right. The math was very oversimplified. Composition itself
+would become a 4 credit course, requiring a third more material. And a
+third more instructors to maintain the cap. My model was averaged over
+all courses, as a first approximation. Composition is only one of many
+courses in which more instructors will be needed, or the class size
+will increase. And, to keep credits to graduation unchanged, these
+increases will require a loss of other courses to accommodate them,
+decreasing the diversity of material to which we expose our students.
+A change to a 4 credit system does not serve our students; in fact, we
+will be greatly reducing the quality of our programs. ... You should send
these two emails out to the general faculty.

+It should be part of the dialog. Thanks. Dennis Machnik

+

+-----Original Message-----

+From: John Krueckeberg [<mailto:jkrueckeberg@mail.plymouth.edu>]

+Sent: Monday, September 25, 2006 9:53 PM

+To: 'Dennis Machnik'

+Subject: RE: [Psc-faculty] Credit Model Task Force

+

+Hi Dennis, Your math seems very straight forward and I appreciate that.
+Could I ask you to explain how it applies to Composition, a class all
+students must take (and should take their first year)? The incoming
+class these days seems to be targeted at 1000 students, about 1/2 of
+which needs to take Composition in the first semester. In reality
+we've recently had some larger classes, some students need to repeat
+it, and perhaps there are slightly more students taking it in the fall
+than the spring. The reality for this semester is: There are 33
+sections, each capped at 20; resulting in 660 seats. Of those 660
+seats this semester, 628 are filled. If we moved to a 4-credit system,
+wouldn't the 33 sections be reduced to 25 sections? To serve the same
+628 students in 25 sections, wouldn't the caps need to be increased to 25 so
as to accommodate the students?

+

+I really do look forward to understanding this.

+

+Sincerely,

+John Krueckeberg

+

+

+

++-----Original Message-----

++From: Dennis Machnik [<mailto:dennisma@mail.plymouth.edu>]

++Sent: Monday, September 25, 2006 1:42 PM

++To: 'John Kulig'; jkrueckeberg@mail.plymouth.edu;

++pcantor@mail.plymouth.edu; psc-faculty@toto.plymouth.edu

++Subject: RE: [Psc-faculty] Credit Model Task Force

++

++ Right now if we had all 3 credit courses, each student taking 4,
++4000 students times 4 courses is 16000 seats. Say 200 profs at 4 each
++is 800
++classes: 16000/800 is 20 per class. If we had 4 credit classes, each
++student taking 3 (same number of credits), that's 12000 seats (4000
++times 3). 200 profs at 3 classes each is 600 classes. Still 20 per
++class. I apologize if my math is oversimplified. I personally oppose
++the change, but this is what my math indicates on class size. Dennis
++Machnik
++
++-----Original Message-----
++From: psc-faculty-bounces@toto.plymouth.edu
++[mailto:psc-faculty-bounces@toto.plymouth.edu] On Behalf Of John Kulig
++Sent: Monday, September 25, 2006 1:05 AM
++To: jkrueckeberg@mail.plymouth.edu; 'John Kulig';
++pcantor@mail.plymouth.edu; psc-faculty@toto.plymouth.edu
++Subject: Re: [Psc-faculty] Credit Model Task Force
++
++John Kr:
++ It's way too late to try to be logical, but, I suspect this is an
++issue where the framing of the problem is important. As far as the 120
++students below, in a 4 credit system, you don't need to see all 120
++people, because every time a student enrolls in one of your classes,
++they progress 1/30th of the way toward graduation ($30 * 4 = 120$),
++rather than 1/40th (40
++*
++ $3 = 120$). Keep the cap at 30, for 3 classes, and see only 90 students.
++Where
++are the 30 missing students? They either graduated before they got to
++your classes (they only need 30 classes to graduate), or, they got 120
++credits from taking my class in kiwi and bananas.
++
++ (this probably is not very satisfying, because bridging the way you
++framed it and the way I framed it needs a few extra logical steps).
++But it does seem obvious that a student under a 4 credit system will
++see fewer different instructors, since they need fewer total classes
++(30, not
++40).
++Maybe coherence will emerge in the morning ...
++
++-----
++John W. Kulig
++Professor of Psychology
++Director, Psychology Honors
++Plymouth State University
++Plymouth NH 03264
++-----

In cases where there is no alternative but to keep the same demand for a course as present, departments could either adjust the average class size minimally or add additional sections.

Faculty will be asked to develop curriculum outlines that will enable us to anticipate and address problems in this area. (22)

Scheduling crunch? (25)
UMF website.