OSU officials may lower graduation requirements

By Eric Brehm
Lantern staff writer

This year’s freshmen may have started at Ohio State a year too soon.

Richard Sisson, provost for Academic Affairs, is prepared to send a letter later this month or in early November to deans of the university’s 19 colleges requesting them to ask departments within their colleges to consider moving toward a 180 credit hour requirement for graduation, said Vice Provost Robert Arnold.

In a speech to University Senate Dec. 3, Sisson expressed concerns about the amount of time it takes for students to graduate under the current 196 credit hour requirement.

"With such demands, it is little wonder that less than 25 percent of our students graduate in four years," Sisson said in the address. "That percentage is simply not acceptable. Our goal must be to reduce the number of credits required for the undergraduate degree to 180."

According to U.S. News and World Report, OSU ranks eighth in the Big Ten academically and requires the most credit hours for graduation.

The proposal will be examined first by the dean of every college then passed to the department chairman, Arnold said. From there, curriculum committees will examine the proposals and send them back to the colleges.

The new curriculum will then go to the Council of Academic Affairs and a vote will be held by the University Senate, he said.

"Changes in some curriculum requirements could come in some majors as soon as next fall and would affect mainly entering freshmen," Arnold said. "Basically, students will probably be here one less quarter."

"We are not approaching this issue in a heavy-handed manner, Arnold said. "There are some majors that really require more than four years, education is a good example."

"U.S. News and World Report ranks us in the top tier of programs," said David Dickinson, dean of the college of engineering. "We are one of the best because of both the depth and breadth. This is going to take a lot of discussion."

Arnold would not speculate as to what classes might be eliminated in what major.

"I transferred from Emory University, I really couldn’t believe the number of classes I was going to have to take outside my major at OSU," said Mark Gask, a junior physics major from Cleveland. "It seems ridiculous."

The past year has been spent examining the effect of reducing the number of hours required for graduation, Arnold said. As a result of the cut, the university would lose around $4 million a year.

The monetary loss will be tempered by new enrollment plans designed to increase the retention rate, Arnold said.

"We have a lot of plans in the works, the $4 million will be counteracted somewhere else," Arnold said. "We will not raise tuition to make up for it."
Graduation hours to be reduced

By Stacia Twitty
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Future graduates in the College of Arts and Sciences may need less credit hours to graduate than what is currently required.

Last quarter the Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate voted in favor of recommended changes and reforms to the general education curriculum (GEC) which would reduce the number of credit hours needed to graduate from 196 to 191.

The Council on Academic Affairs is currently reviewing the recommendations.

"I don't think they should reduce the credit hours," said Jill Klein, a sophomore majoring in music. "I'm all for learning as much as possible."

The change could lead to a reduction of five GEC credit hours for students working on bachelor's of art degrees, and up to 20 GEC credit hour reductions for students working on bachelor's of science degrees.

"It affects bachelor's of art students more because their program is pretty specific, detailed and organized," said Martha Garland, chairwoman of the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee which reviewed the GEC and made the recommendations. "And an inflexible curriculum makes it more difficult for those students."

In an attempt to better the GEC, the committee recommended that parts of the GEC be made less complicated and less extensive. They also recommended that the importance of all requirements in the GEC be made more clear.

The committee recommended that the separate data analysis requirement for bachelor's of science students be eliminated.

Garland said that bachelor's of science students already receive an abundance of data analysis in courses required for their major. They also recommended the capstone requirement, an advance study requirement for bachelor's of art students, and the contemporary world requirement for bachelor's of science students be eliminated.

If the Council on Academic Affairs approves the recommendations, they will be implemented immediately and could affect Spring quarter graduates.

"It would be screwy if they passed this proposal Winter Quarter," said Mark Kalina, a senior majoring in plant biology. "I've been taking full loads this year just to graduate Spring Quarter and they're going to reduce the hours with no prior notice."

Garland said it is important for students to know that these are only recommendations.

"But it's in the process and change is likely," she said.

Review of the GEC was initiated in part because the university is undergoing accreditation. OSU was asked by North Central Accreditation to assess its undergraduate curriculum.

In 1986, the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience (CUE) recommended an examination to simplify and possibly reduce the core curriculum.

Garland added that it was time to review the five-year program and to make sure that it was serving the students.

The committee also wanted to to know if the entire curriculum was too much, and if it was the reason for students taking longer than four years to graduate.

"Overall the committee didn't think the curriculum was why students are taking longer," Garland said. "They take longer because they change majors or don't take full loads, not because of the amount of hours needed to graduate."

Garland said the purpose of the recommendations and reforms is to not make the curriculum easier, but to make scheduling classes easier.

The council may vote on the recommendations as early as the end of Winter Quarter, she said.