

May 7th, 2020

Steering Committee Members:

By unanimous vote, the UNST Council has moved to revise the general education requirements for transfer students by adding a category which states that students transferring to PSU with over 135 credits will only need to take a Senior Capstone to complete their UNST requirements for graduation (see Appendix) effective Fall 2020. This solution was proposed to the Council by Executive Director Linda George after consultation with Dean Shelly Chabon in response to concerns voiced by the Academic Requirements Committee.

Its immediate purpose is to remedy several ongoing challenges faced by our current transfer students from financially-related school closures and to prepare for the likely influx of transfers resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the last two years, the Portland area has seen the closure of multiple institutions: Marylhurst University (Summer 2018), Art Institute of Portland (Summer 2018), Oregon College of Art & Craft (Summer 2019) and Concordia College (Summer 2020), which have generated spikes in transfer students hoping to complete their degree at PSU. While challenging and jarring under any circumstances, these closure have been particularly frustrating for Senior Transfers (incoming students with 135+ Credit Hours).

Likewise, this influx of transfers will continue to tax PSU support services, specifically Admissions, Advising, and the Registrar's Office, who now must cope with the challenge of helping students while observing social distancing guidelines. The only recourse available to Senior Transfers is to petition the Academic Requirements Committee resulting in more delays, uncertainty, and an increase workload for PSU staff and faculty. Indeed, Advising and Career Services confirms that the Junior Cluster requirements and the petitions process has deterred students they have counseled from transferring to PSU.

The likelihood of school closures has increased and it is likely that students elsewhere in the Oregon University System, particularly at schools with high residential populations like University of Oregon and Oregon State, will transfer to PSU for AY 2020-2021 and beyond. Right now, thousands of students across the state are reassessing their educational priorities and wrestling with tough choices. They are looking for a safe place to land and the support they need to finish their education in the face of an uncertain future. PSU has served students during past crises and will help them to weather the current ones.

While the proposed revision was initiated in response to high-credit students transferring from closing institutions, the PSU general education transfer policy has not been reviewed in some time. In reviewing this change, UNST Council considered the time and cost burden placed on transferring Seniors against the possible benefit gained by taking a Junior Cluster. Transferring Seniors have very likely taken many courses outside their major in order to have accumulated over 135 credits, thereby accruing breadth to their education -- one goal of the Junior Cluster. Individual analysis of transcripts to verify this would be burdensome since there are approximately 300 students/year who transfer with Senior status.

In conclusion, the increased frequency of financially-related school closures alone warrants a reconsideration of general education requirements for transfers, but the high cost of education and the changing demographics of our students make this a timely change. In the interest of placing the needs of students first and simplifying its policy to ease this transition for the students and staff involved, the UNST Council is proud to have taken this action and looks forward to working with the Faculty Senate and other stakeholders to ensure it is implemented quickly.

Sincerely,

Albert R. Spencer

UNST Council, Chair

APPENDIX

Current Policy

Credits Transferred	University Studies Requirements
0-29	Freshman Inquiry - UNST 1X1, 1X2, 1X3
30-59	Three Sophomore Inquiry courses - UNST 211-299
60-74	Two Sophomore Inquiry courses - UNST 211-299
75-89	One Sophomore Inquiry course - UNST 211-299
90+	Three Upper-Division Cluster courses (12 credits) and Senior Capstone (6 credits)

UNST Council Approved Policy

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75-89	One Sophomore Inquiry course - UNST 211-299
90-134	Three Upper-Division Cluster courses (12 credits) and Senior Capstone (6 credits)
135+	Senior Capstone (6 credits)