

To: Faculty Senate

From: Budget Committee

Steven Boyce (co-chair), Mitch Cruzan (co-chair), Jennifer Allen, Tina Anctil, Candace Avalos, Cara Eckhardt, Jill Emery, Eric Geschke, Sam Gioia, Brenda Glascott, David Hansen, Arthur Hendricks, ChiaYin Hsu, Tim Knispel, Martin Lafrenz, Janice Lee, Derek Tretheway, Sarena Velena-White, Stephen Walton

RE: Statement of Budgetary Impact on Proposed SINQ Changes

The Budget Committee reviewed a statement of Budgetary Impact of two proposals for changes to University Studies requirements. Three members of the Budget Committee were assigned to review the statement, and then we met as a committee to finalize our statement in response.

Proposal #1: Reduce the required number of SINQs to two instead of three. For students transferring in at the Sophomore level their transfer requirements will be adjusted. We are proposing that transfer Sophomores take at least one SINQ (30-74 transfer credits - 2 Sophomore Inquiry courses required; 75-90 transfer credits – 1 Sophomore Inquiry course required).

Proposal #2: Eliminate the requirement that students take the SINQ that matches the Junior Cluster. We propose to make this connection “recommended”.

Below is the Budgetary Impact statement the committee received from Linda George, Interim Executive Director of University Studies.

Roughly 60 sections of SINQ/year will no longer be necessary with the proposed curricular change of reducing the SINQ requirement from 3 courses to two. Around 1800 fewer students would be enrolling in one SINQ. The financial impact is positive for both the University and PSU students. Students would be paying \$106,200 less in mentor fees (\$59/student/SINQ x 1800 students). These fees pay for SINQ mentor stipends. The University would be reducing the need for mentor remissions costing \$133,000 (10 mentors * \$13,300 graduate tuition). Note that the proposed reduction in SINQs will not reduce the number of credits required for graduation so there would be no loss in SCH for the University.

For the second proposal of de-linking the requirement that a SINQ course match the Cluster does not appear to have significant budget implications.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Best,

Linda

Three committee members were assigned to review the proposal and comment on the statement of budgetary impact. We then discussed the statement as a committee and finalized our statement, which appears below.

Comment #1. Budgetary impacts for adopting this proposal primarily regard reductions in UNST's budget. The lack of funding for SINQ mentor remissions this proposal addresses has been an ongoing issue. Reducing the SINQ requirement from 3 courses to 2 courses will allow students more flexibility to take courses to fulfill their credit requirements. A potential budgetary concern is capacity for students to take an additional elective course from other units in the university, but this is not an issue because many units are facing enrollment declines. Thus in addition to these changes addressing the problem of the current lack of funding for graduate remissions, implementing these changes could reduce the percentage of under enrolled courses across campus and improve retention and recruitment of students due to increased flexibility and decreased fees. Although this change will reduce funding opportunities for graduate students, it should have minimal impact on particular graduate programs because SINQ mentors are enrolled in graduate programs from throughout the university.

Comment #2. I agree with the comments above regarding the overall impact of this change. The budgetary impacts seem minimal - the main negative impact seems to be on funding for graduate students, and as noted, these impacts will be distributed. The proposed change would likely have positive impacts on retention and recruitment as a result of greater flexibility and fewer fees. (My anecdotal understanding is that the UNST requirements are sometimes a deterrent to transfer students considering PSU).

Comment #3. I concur with comments above. The rationale for changing the SINQ requirements seems sound and the statements from the various units support it.

I think it is possible that some graduate programs will suffer as a result of the reduction in SINQs and the reduction in mentor positions: for small programs, a loss of funding for one or two graduate students may have a significant impact and cause the program to reach a tipping point (that is, enrollment decline or elimination); for larger programs this would not be significant.

Also, although demand for elective courses should increase due to the reduction in required SINQs, that demand may be unevenly distributed, and this could negatively impact departments which have faculty teaching SINQs who lose them and need an additional course within their home department.

Comment #4: It is possible this reduction of a sophomore-level requirement could affect Honors enrollment because students might decide not to pursue Honors if it requires more GE courses than UNST. Honors plans on responding to this through messaging.