



NEW JERSEY

Association of State Colleges and Universities

150 West State Street, Trenton NJ 08608

Phone (609) 989-1100

**Senate Higher Education Committee
October 17, 2016
Senate Bill No. 1871**

The state colleges and universities support the intent of this legislation for students to be able to complete most baccalaureate-degree programs within four years with full-time study. Our institutions have already put in place measures to help full-time students finish in four years. In addition to the bill not being necessary, we oppose it because it interferes with our boards of trustees' authority over degree programs and educational curriculum.

Our institutions support the concept that most baccalaureate degrees should be structured to be capable of completion within four years. For example, Montclair State University has had a 120-credit maximum in place for over a decade. Ramapo College has four-year plans for each of its academic major offerings. These plans, posted on the web and introduced to students during their orientation, are guides for students to clearly understand the requirements of their degree as well as chart out and track their progress on completing all requirements.

While a national survey indicated that nearly 50 percent of all programs at all institutions require only 120 credits, 10 percent of programs required 124 credits, and 15 percent require 128 credits. These differences reflect higher requirements in some programs, and higher overall requirements at many institutions. Some of our institutions have these higher requirements.

Another important difference among institutions is the concept of the "credit hour" itself. Some institutions do not use it. For example:

- The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) is on a course unit system. The typical undergraduate degree program at TCNJ is 32 course units (with the exception of Engineering and Accountancy). A recommended academic load for the majority of students during the traditional Fall and Spring semester is four course units over eight semesters.
- Stockton University has had a four-credit per course model since its founding over 40 years ago, under which students take 16 credits per semester (four courses) for eight semesters (or four years) and graduate with 128 credits.

TCNJ, Ramapo, and Stockton have the three highest four-year graduation rates among the state colleges and universities.

www.njascu.org

*The College of New Jersey
Kean University
Montclair State University*

*New Jersey City University
Ramapo College of New Jersey
Rowan University*

*Stockton University
Thomas Edison State University
William Paterson University*

Given these differences among institutions toward academic programming, we recommend an amendment to Section 1.a. of the bill that would replace the phrase “the standard number of credits required for the award of a baccalaureate degree from a four-year public institution of higher education is 120 credit hours” with “the expected time to complete a baccalaureate degree from a four-year public institution of higher education for full-time students is four years.”

We appreciate the exceptions in Section 1.b for certain degrees that have different accreditation and/or certification standards.

- For example, Bachelor of Architecture is accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), which qualifies graduates for the Architect Registration Examination (ARE). NAAB-accredited B. Arch. programs must include at least 150 credit hours, or the quarter-hour equivalent, of which at least 45 credit hours, or the quarter-hour equivalent, are in general studies.

We believe the legislation is not needed, as our institutions are already reducing the number of credits required for a degree. For example:

- New Jersey City University established a new general studies curriculum that reduces the number of general studies credits required for degree completion from 66 to 44; and
- In 2011, William Paterson University decreased the minimum number of graduation credits from 128 to 120. The number of graduates in 2012 and 2013 increased by 20% over 2011 levels.

Finally, we object to the bill’s infringement on the legal authority of board of trustees that has been in place for decades. The legislature granted the boards of trustees of the senior public colleges and universities with the power and duty “to establish admission standards and requirements and standards for granting diplomas, certificates and degrees” (C. 18A:3B-6.d), and “to determine the educational curriculum and program of the college consistent with the programmatic mission of the institution” (C. 18A:64-6b). Authority over degree programs and curriculum should remain with the boards of trustees.

Thank you for consideration our concerns.