San José State
UNIVERSITY

A campus of The California State University

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SS-S00-5

At its meeting of May 1, 2000, the SJSU Academic Senate passed the following Sense of the Senate Resolution presented by Jonathan Roth for Curriculum and Research Committee.

SENSE OF THE SENATE RESOLUTION

PROPOSED TITLE 5 REVISIONS

Whereas: The Board of Trustees is considering a proposal to revise Article 6 of Subchapter 2 of Chapter 1 of Title 5 on regulations governing the Undergraduate Degree reducing the minimum number of semester units required for all baccalaureate degrees issued by CSU campuses from 124 semester units to 120 (or 180 quarter units), and furthermore, requires that "each campus shall establish and maintain a monitoring system to ensure that acceptable justification is provided for all program requirements that extend the baccalaureate unit requirement beyond the normative minimum of 120 units," and

Whereas: The Board intends to act on this proposal at its May 5, 2000 plenary meeting,

Therefore, be it

Resolved: That this resolution be forwarded to the Board of Trustees, Chancellor's Office, State Academic Senate and the Academic Senate of CSU Humboldt and

Resolved: That the SJSU Academic Senate recommends that this proposal be immediately rescinded and not implemented for reasons described below:

1. 1. The current version of Article 6 of Subchapter 2 of Chapter 1 of Title 5 supports upper limits of 132 semester units for Bachelor of Science degrees and 140 semester units for Bachelor of Science in Engineering degrees, and said limits are generally accepted as reasonable degree maxima on all CSU campuses, and
2. The proposed revision of Article 6 of Subchapter 2 of Chapter 1 of Title 5 makes no such clear and authoritative statement recognizing the appropriateness of higher-unit Bachelors of Science degrees as confirmed by the experience and rational deliberations of faculty and other curricular experts on the CSU campuses who through rigorous faculty-driven curricular process arrive at degree requirements, and
3. A resolution passed by the Humboldt State University Academic Senate (09-99/00EX) asks the Board of Trustees to postpone consideration of this matter to allow sufficient consultation and deliberation with CSU faculty, because the proposed revision of Article 6 of Subchapter 2 of Chapter 1 of Title 5 was prepared without consultation with or approval of the CSU Academic Senate or the academic senates of the individual CSU campuses, and
4. This proposal would undermine the quality of our students education. While programs might be able to reorganize to reach their curriculum in 120 units, students will not necessarily be able to learn this curriculum in the period prescribed. This proposal would negatively impact both the actual quality of our degree and public perception of it. Many entering CSU students, while technically meeting the same course requirements for admission as the University of California often begin their college education with greater challenges to overcome than students entering UC or comparable universities.
5. This proposal does not address the root causes of students taking too many units to graduate, as this outcome results from multiple factors such as student decisions to change majors, excess transfer units from Community Colleges that are not applicable to the final CSU major, the need for remediation, and the occasional unavailability of required classes, and
6. The justification for this proposal is imprecise and founded in part on spurious reasoning and data of questionable relevance to the CSU system, as exemplified in the following points:

    a. a. The proposal implies that the reduction of units to degree will shorten the time it takes a student to graduate, yet provides neither facts nor evidence of

this causal relationship in the context of CSU students who often need remediation and additional social support to finish their degrees.

b. b. The proposal justifies a reduction of units to 120 based on a "belief" that the unit number of 124 was arbitrarily continued as a unit minimum when it should have been reduced after the deletion of a four-unit physical education activity requirement, yet again provides no concrete historical evidence.

c. The proposal suggests that the CSU be guided in this decision by "common practice in California and nationally to make 120 semester units the minimum to be required for graduation" without examining the context and comparability of institutions that are currently following the 120 semester unit policy.

d. The proposal argues that the bachelor s degree is but an intermediate phase of an individual s educational life and refers to the National Center for Education Statistics report that states "72 percent of [sampled] baccalaureate degree recipients who had *not* entered graduate education expected to earn a graduate degree during their careers." Yet said proposal offers no concrete reference to the number of CSU graduates who enter into graduate study, thereby providing no evidence that the CSU undergraduate degrees are not the last or only significant educational achievements in our students lives. Furthermore, this argument trivializes the baccalaureate, may reduce CSU students competitiveness for graduate schools, and imposes a burden of remediation on employers and graduate schools.

e. e. The proposal emphasizes "consistency" in various contexts: between UC and CSU requirements, among variants of the baccalaureate degree, and between Title 5 language of the master s degree and that of the baccalaureate degree. However, the goal of standardization is not superior to that of campus-driven individuality and authority over critical curricular decisions affecting students, who in the end receive their degrees on the individual campuses and not from a central office location.

7. The predilection of the proposal towards "demonstrated" learning or assessment is undermined by setting upon the CSU faculty a conflicting set of work goals. The goals of assessment increase the need for course time devoted to diagnostic and formative assessment, including feedback and will necessarily conflict with curricular demands of shortening degree programs. To request both of these organizational changes simultaneously shows shortsightedness in terms of the predictable impacts on faculty workload and commitment to student learning, and The financial costs of implementing a "monitoring system to ensure that acceptable justification is provided for all program requirements that extend the baccalaureate unit requirement beyond the normative minimum of 120 units" are believed by the

SJSU Academic Senate to be significant as follows:

a. While BAs are normally 124 units at San Jose State University, many other undergraduate degrees are presently at least 132 units. The proposal represents on average nearly a ten percent reduction in the number of units to degree, almost a full semester s load from the student s perspective. The direct and indirect costs will be significant as campuses undertake policy revisions and curricular reviews. Direct costs will stem from a heavy investment of time, energy and resources, on the part of faculty, staff and administrators, in reorganizing the standing curricula to meet the new limit. The work involved in justifying or changing each of these degree programs will be excessive and unwarranted in view of the uncertain gains from imposing the proposed monitoring system.

b. The social cost of this proposal would likely be pressure to reduce the number of General Education units required. CSU students should not be short-changed in learning the communication and computational skills, the global, cultural, historical and socioeconomic perspectives, and other aspects of general education.

8. This appears to be another example of an initiative, whose implications and effects have not been thought through before being imposed on the system by the central administration as discussed in the Out of Crisis White Paper, endorsed by the SJSU Academic Senate (AS 1073) and six other campus Academic Senates. The implementation of these proposed revisions in Title 5 will result in widespread discontent and consternation among many faculty, staff and administrators, as they again scramble to put a program, developed without their consultation, into place against their better judgments. The sudden appearance of this proposal indicates that despite assurances made by the CSU system that the culture of top-down, centralized management discussed in the White Paper shows no sign of changing.