

Faculty Assembly Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, February 7, 2017

Time: 3:00 pm

GHW: Room 252/263

- I. Meeting called to order by Faculty Senate President Gary Renz. Introduced Carol Guehring as Faculty Senate Assistant.
- II. Announcements: None
- III. Presentation by Dan Hellinger on the following proposal to change the required number of credit hours for undergraduate students to graduate from 128 to 120 credit hours:

“Resolved:

Recognizing the minimum required for a bachelor’s degree of many area institutions is 120, the Webster University faculty believes we should review the longstanding minimum requirement of 128 credits. We believe Webster’s policy on minimum number of credits for an undergraduate degree should reflect consideration of the number of factors, including what is in the best interest of students; practices by similar institutions; recruitment implications for full time, part-time and transfer students; financial implications; and the need for some programs to require a higher number of credits. We suggest that a small task force composed of administrators with relevant responsibilities and faculty appointed by the Senate be established to review the policy and make a recommendation for consideration by the faculty at one of the Spring Assembly meetings. Should the recommendation be to lower the minimum, the task force should also provide a proposal for the transition, in particular in regard to how this change may apply to currently enrolled undergraduate students.”

1. D. Hellinger wants to know if the faculty supports his proposal to change the graduation requirement for undergraduate students from 128 credit hours to 120 credit hours. He said the administration has told him on at least three separate occasions that they are fully behind the move, though he has not been provided any data or figures on how it would affect the University financially.
2. D. Hellinger said that 120 credit hours will be a minimum requirement and programs can require more credit hours.
3. The current 128 credit hour requirement forces many full-time undergraduate students to pay additional tuition or they must take 16 credit hours each semester as flat-fee students. Students are also taking too many credit hours in certain semesters in order to meet the 128 credit hour graduation requirement. Students taking too many credit hours in a semester in order to graduate with 128 credit hours leads to less learning because students do not do their best when taking so many credit hours at one time.
4. D. Hellinger said there are too many variables to know exactly how this proposal will affect the university financially. He has asked the administration for assistance in determining the financial impact of a change to 120 credit hours.
5. D. Hellinger asked for volunteers for an informal task force that will examine other universities and colleges that have gone through a similar reduction in credit hours.

IV. Questions and Discussion by Faculty:

6. How will the change affect what constitutes a “full-time” student? Will the number of credit hours required each semester to be a full-time student be reduced to 12 hours?
7. Does the proposed change to 120 credit hours for graduation apply to all programs? No, programs could have more than 120 credit hours.
8. Faculty member stated that compared to the national average, Webster students are taking more classes to graduate than many other schools, including Ivy League institutions.
9. Colleges and schools should look at reducing their program requirements, capstone requirements and GCP requirements.
10. Who will have the authority to decide on major requirements? GCP requirements? Electives?
11. The graduation requirements, no matter what they consist of, should stay “student centered.”
12. The faculty does not understand how the budget functions with respect to academic programs.
13. Under the 120 credit hour proposal, the number of elective credit hours would suffer. In addition, study abroad could be impacted if fewer credit hours are required.
14. Some faculty members think what is taught should be based on what the market demands. Others faculty members think Webster’s focus should be on staying a strong liberal arts school.
15. Would more students stay at Webster to obtain a second major because they have the leeway of taking more classes? Or, in the alternative, would they not have the time to do so and simply graduate with one degree?
16. Will a survey go to students asking them for information on what drives their choices or colleges, curriculum, majors, minors, etc.?
17. What are the mechanics of changing to 120 credit hours for graduation? Does it need a motion? Does it need to go to the Curriculum Committee? Can the Senate look into it? G. Renz will communicate to the Assembly how this procedure will be handled, but stated any changes will be presented to the Faculty Assembly for approval.
18. How many students actually graduate with exactly 128 credit hours? What is the average number of credit hours Webster students have accumulated at graduation?

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.