



BOARD OF REGENTS

SUMMARY OF ITEM FOR ACTION, INFORMATION OR DISCUSSION

TOPIC: Alternative Means of Earning Academic Degree Credit

COMMITTEE: Effectiveness and Efficiency

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING: January 25, 2012

SUMMARY: In 2005, the Board of Regents adopted a policy designed to increase the number of credits generated outside of the traditional classroom. The Board determined that students should upon graduation have earned 12 credits by these alternative means. The Board requested that USMO staff monitor progress towards this goal and report on its implementation. The attached report details system-wide and institutional performance against the goal over the last five years.

Overall, the USM has met the desired targets for the last three years. 5 of 7 institutions for whom the policy is applicable met the benchmark and all have made progress towards the goal. On the whole the policy has been successfully implemented and has provided the additional physical capacity to accommodate between 2000-3000 students system-wide in traditional classroom settings.

ALTERNATIVE(S): This is an information item.

FISCAL IMPACT: This is an information item.

CHANCELLOR'S RECOMMENDATION: This is an information item.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Received as information. DATE: January 25, 2012

BOARD ACTION: DATE:

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**Update on Effectiveness and Efficiency Initiatives:
Alternative Means of Earning Academic Degree Credit**



**Submitted to Board of Regents' Committee on Effectiveness and Efficiency
January 25, 2011**

**Office of the Chief Operating Officer /
Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance**

Introduction

Beginning in 2003, the Board of Regents E&E Workgroup developed a set of policy-related initiatives designed to improve the USM's capacity to enroll students. One of the key initiatives that emerged from that effort was the adoption in 2005 of a policy calling on each institution to increase the number of credits completed outside the traditional classroom. The Board believed that development and implementation of this policy would effectively reduce the amount of resources required to educate each student, improve the quality of the student's education and create additional capacity on the campus for additional students. This report reviews the adopted policy, discusses the methodology that has been used to track progress and success under it, and presents the results of that tracking.

The Policy

In February of 2005, the Board of Regents adopted the following policy:

III- 8.01 - UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND POLICY ON ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF EARNING ACADEMIC DEGREE CREDIT

To expand capacity, enhance the quality of the educational experience students receive, and to encourage timely progress toward a degree, the USM will encourage students to take advantage of alternative means of earning academic degree credit. Options available to students include: online courses; registration in special sessions; independent study or undergraduate research; study abroad; service learning; internships; credit by exam; and advanced placement credits.

On average, first-time freshmen will complete at least 12 credits required for graduation outside of the traditional classroom experience as part of their undergraduate programs.

Institutions that admit first-time freshmen shall report periodically on the average number of alternative credits completed by baccalaureate degree recipients.

This policy is effective for first-time freshmen who matriculate in the Fall 2005 semester.

In crafting the policy, the Board chose twelve semester credit hours as the benchmark because the number equates roughly to one full-time (4-course) semester, or 10% of the total course load needed to complete a bachelor's degree. Further, the categories of credit listed as possible options in the policy were intended to be seen as guidelines rather than an exhaustive list, with other types of activities, if substantially similar,

allowed even though they were not explicitly listed in the policy. For example, credits derived from International Baccalaureate (IB) participation are for practical purposes the same as Advanced Placement (AP) and thus were considered allowable under the policy and have been included in this analysis.

Measurement of progress and success

Measurement of progress on this policy presented a significant challenge. When it adopted the policy effective with the Fall 2005 incoming class, the Board of Regents also specified that a monitoring process should be created that, early on, would not just assess implementation of the policy but also help assess whether the policy was having its intended effect. However, many students wait until relatively late in their college career before participating in study abroad opportunities, internships, and extensive independent study work. Therefore for the System, creating a process that would appropriately measure progress towards success under the policy well before the initial class of Fall 2005 graduated was a major hurdle.

To overcome the hurdle and capture the full range of efforts at all stages in a student's career at the earliest point, the System created an aggregate measure. The total number of credit hours generated by undergraduates within the appropriate categories (AP/IB, Study abroad, etc.) was compared to the total number of undergraduate credit hours generated overall. The target for the institutions was set for each year based on the progression of the class arriving in Fall 2005. As a result, the goal was 2.5% in 2006, 5.0% in 2007, 7.5% in 2008, and 10% in 2009. The logic behind this progression was that if an institution was consistently generating 10% of its undergraduate credit hours then students would necessarily be generating 12 credits (or more) by these non-traditional methods over the course of their college careers.

Results

Table 1 summarizes the results of the efforts to expand alternative means of earning college credit.

Table 1

Year	BSU	CSU	FSU	SU	TU	UMBC	UMCP	UMES	USM
2005	*	4.3%	*	8.4%	4.3%	8.7%	*	4.3%	5.9%
2006	2.3%	7.6%	7.8%	9.4%	6.1%	10.1%	7.4%	5.5%	6.2%
2007	2.4%	8.9%	9.2%	9.4%	7.3%	11.9%	12.4%	5.7%	9.8%
2008	5.8%	9.8%	9.6%	11.6%	7.6%	13.2%	12.5%	4.9%	10.4%
2009	5.5%	7.2%	10.0%	12.9%	7.1%	13.2%	14.2%	5.2%	11.1%
2010	11.1%	8.8%	12.6%	15.2%	7.7%	15.3%	14.4%	6.9%	12.3%

* Data omitted because of Inconsistencies in reporting requirements in 2005

Overall, the data show that USM institutions have met the established 12 hour (or 10%) goal for three years, and individually 5 of 7 institutions reached the goal in the most recent reporting year. All institutions have made progress towards the goal with the greatest progress achieved at Salisbury, Frostburg, UMBC and UMCP. Coppin, Towson and UMES have made the least progress. Four institutions, Frostburg, Salisbury, UMBC and UMCP, have expanded their efforts significantly beyond the 10% requirement and are on course to achieve as many as 18 hours on average per graduate in the near future.

Conclusion

On average students at USM institutions are generating 12 or more credit hours of credit by non-traditional means as of the fall 2010. This has opened sufficient physical class and lab space on campus to include approximately 2,000-3,000 additional students in the traditional classrooms per year. The E&E academic initiative to increase the number of credits completed outside the traditional classroom has been successful to date.