

TOPIC: CREDIT HOUR WAIVER FOR SCIENCE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

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I. SUMMARY

At the April 3, 2009 Commission meeting, Department of Higher Education (DHE) staff presented a “preliminary briefing” concerning credit waivers for science teacher preparation programs. The Commission responded favorably to the idea of increasing the credit hour cap, which is currently set at 126 credits. This action item requests approval of an “across the board” credit waiver for science teacher preparation programs, increasing the cap to 138 credits and lifting the four-year graduation agreement for those programs.

II. BACKGROUND

After the April 3, 2009 Commission meeting, staff polled the Colorado Council of Deans of Education (CCODE) and found that all are in favor of increasing the credit cap for science programs to 138 credits.

C.R.S. 23-1-125, the Student Bill of Rights, states

- (a) Students should be able to complete their . . . baccalaureate programs in no more than one hundred twenty credit hours unless there are additional degree requirements recognized by the commission;
- (b) A student can sign a two-year or four-year graduation agreement that formalizes a plan for that student to obtain a degree in two or four years, unless there are additional degree requirements recognized by the commission;

Staff proposes that increasing the credit cap and lifting the four-year graduation agreement for science teacher preparation programs will better serve the state’s teacher preparation programs and teacher candidates. Teacher preparation programs will no longer have to pack the required coursework into a four-year plan; and teacher candidates will have more options for the type of science degree sought, will be better prepared to teach secondary science and will have other career options that also make preparing to teach more attractive.

III. COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY FUND (COF) CONSIDERATIONS

A credit waiver of 138 credits will still meet the requirements of the College Opportunity Fund (COF). C.R.S. § 23-18-202(5):

- (c) (I) An eligible undergraduate student shall not receive a stipend from the

college opportunity fund for more than one hundred forty-five credit hours during the eligible undergraduate student's lifetime; except that:

(A) If an eligible undergraduate student has received stipend payments for one hundred forty-five credit hours and the student has received a bachelor's degree, the eligible undergraduate student is eligible to receive stipend payments for an additional thirty undergraduate credit hours.

(e) Notwithstanding the lifetime-credit-hour limitation established pursuant to paragraph (c) of this subsection (5), an eligible undergraduate student may apply to the commission for a waiver of the limitation. The commission may grant a waiver of the lifetime-credit-hour limitation...

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Commission approve a credit waiver of 138 credits and lift the four-year graduation agreement requirement for all science teacher preparation programs.

V. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

23-1-125 C.R.S.
23-18-202 C.R.S.