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Memo Regarding Learning Modules, Credits and Calendar

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GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY
MEMO

TO: GSU STAFF

FROM: William E. Engbretson

DATE: November 25, 1970

SUBJECT: Learning Modules, Credits and Calendar.

As you know the GSU staff from last year tried to generate a variety of concepts to serve as bases for consideration by a sharply increased staff this year. In so doing, we realized that planning parameters were being broadly described while, at the same time, the lack of closure gave us both increased internal flexibility and the ambiguity implicit in dealing with concepts rather than fixed limits.

1. Calendar

Our proposed GSU 1971-72 calendar evolved and has been approved in its broad form, by the Board. We are now at work further defining and refining the details of the calendar so that it will provide internal flexibility, compare favorably with the teaching/working days of our sister institutions, provide appropriate "break" periods, etc., all within the frameworks of our program needs, GSU's uniquenesses, our 2 month "sessions," Board policies, the 12 month a year operational mandate from BHE, academic expectancies such as admissions, registration, evaluation, vacations, etc. Mr. Baysore is collating all these data and will present one or more definitive calendars for consideration by the appropriate task force, the Administrative Council and general staff soon.

2. Learning Modules and Credit

Learning Modules have been defined in our Proposed Units of Instruction. We all worked on these concepts during the Writers Conferences (2) and Squatters Sessions (2) this past year, and rather more intensive discussion of Modules took place during our work in September-October on Units of Instruction. It is not the purpose of this memo to define Modules except in general terms following up what we've already written and submitted in the Summary of Proposed New Units of Instruction and the Units proposals themselves. In those proposals Modules have been referred to as -

A. Module (Webster's Third)

- A standard or unit of measurement
- A unit of size
- Small measure
- Something that serves as a model or pattern

B. In GSU's sense a Learning Module is a small learning unit that 1.) can take a variety of forms, 2.) varies in time and in value, 3.) is generally replicable while still permitting individual variations, and 4.) is measurable.

- C. In discussions and in writing the results of those discussions we have indicated that Learning Modules are individual units of learning or subject matter material. Learning Modules should be generally expressed in the form of performance objectives that can be measurably achieved and recorded.

Obviously, a wide variety of views are held about the Module concept. Evidence of this exists in the various drafts of program statements of the various Colleges, the Administrative Council, staff discussions, the deliberations of Task Forces, etc.

We have grappled extensively with the problem of credit as it relates to Modules, time sequences, tuition, etc. A variety of proposals and communications from individuals and units in GSU ensued during this complex process and undoubtedly we will continue to propose and refine our thinking.

However, the need for planning parameters to guide our current and subsequent actions is paramount. The matter of credit has been discussed in the Colleges, the Task Force, in the concerned support units, and in the Administrative Council.

These discussions may be summarized, in part, by relating the problems connected to the need for this planning parameter.

1. Transferability - how can we credit incoming and outgoing students who wish to transfer their credit from or to another institution?
2. Comparability - how can we equate "work" done elsewhere or at GSU, not only for transfers, but for Board of Governors, BHE, USOE and other kinds of required systems reporting?
3. Equitability - how can we assure our students that they will not be discriminated against by coming to GSU by exceedingly extensive demands on their time/energy/financial resources for completion of degrees and credentials?
4. Flexibility - how can we attain and maintain maximal internal flexibility in Modules for the accommodation of individuals' needs?
5. Programming - how can we attain and maintain systems of programming? (Programming of physical and human resources as to schedules and timing, locations, equipment, "loading" factors for all students, faculty and others, relative "loadings" of graduate and undergraduate sequences, community services, cooperative education, etc.)
6. Recording - how can we adequately develop recording systems for student progression in his continuing achievement of performance objectives and modules towards defined and contracted program, degree and credential goals?
7. Accommodation - how can we provide for the quantities of Modules, programs, students, faculty, resources as we swiftly move from 500 FTE to 6000 FTE?
8. Accounting - how can we fairly and equitably bill for and account for required tuition and fees, scholarships and financial aids such as tuition waivers, for full and part-time students, in-state, out-of-state and foreign students, etc?

Given these and other more detailed related questions the following guidelines have evolved:

1. Learning modules comprise the most direct faculty to student instructional unit.
2. Each learning module can vary in time and in value.
3. Learning modules may carry "credit" varying from one to eight units. Modules may be developed for any specific value between one and eight units. Only in special circumstances would modules be developed for seven or eight units.
4. Each module is expressed in terms of performance objectives that can be achieved by a variety of means.
5. As a module increases in units it increases in sophistication.
6. Educational accountability can be established by the measured achievement of the performance objectives.
7. A module unit has the value for transferability, comparability and equivalence of a semester hour of credit.
8. A student's full-time load will not normally exceed 8 units per session.
9. For tuition and recording purposes 7-8 units in one or more modules will constitute full-time, 5-6 units 3/4 time, 3-4 units 1/2 time, and 1-2 units 1/4 time.
10. Tuition (amount to be defined by BHE and perhaps the Illinois Legislature) will be derived by dividing the total annual amount by five (for the five sessions) and then applied to each session and divided by eights (for eight units) and the student pays tuition according to the number of units he enrolls for.

As an example, the BHE proposed resident annual tuition will be \$422 for BOGSCU institutions. Therefore, five sessions times eight units = 40 divided into \$422 = \$10.55 tuition per unit. For non-residents the proposal is \$1266 annually which equals \$31.65 per unit.

11. Students may contract for one or more modules depending on value, during each session but generally not to exceed eight units.
12. A full-time student at GSU, in comparison with other systems elsewhere, should be able to accomplish a normal progression toward a degree at the rate of 8 units per session for eight sessions totaling approximately 64 units at the baccalaureate level, and 8 units per session for four sessions totaling approximately 32 units at the masters level. (This establishes equitability for GSU students with quarter, trimester and semester sequences.)

13. Generally, a one unit module is expected to require about 40 hours of student work in a session. This amounts to about 5 hours of student work per week if the module extends over the eight (7 1/2) week session. It also permits modules to vary in time sequences. On this basis, a student might normally and legitimately expect to expend at least 2560 hours (64 credits x 40 hours per credit) to complete a baccalaureate degree and at least 1280 hours (32 credits x 40 hours per credit) to complete a masters degree.

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