



Senate Resolution #1
of the 2016-2017 Session

To Oppose the Faculty Senate Registration Credit Hour Cap Change

Introduced by

COLIN SHAW, Duncan College President, 2015-2016
JESSICA HARTZ, Duncan College Senator, 2016-2017
RAHUL KOTHARI, Lovett College President, 2016-2017
LY NGUYEN, Martel College President, 2016-2017
KEN GROSZMAN, Hanszen College President, 2016-2017
JOSIAH GRACE, Duncan College, 2015-2016
Wednesday, April 20th, 2016

Passed on

Wednesday, MONTH DAY, 2016
GRIFFIN THOMAS, SA President, 2016-2017
Presiding Officer

Whereas, the Rice University Mission aspires to cultivate “a diverse community of learning and discovery” and to “increas[e] access to both education and knowledge”;

Whereas, Rice aspires to encourage students to find their academic and extracurricular passions;

Whereas, Chairman of the Rice Board of Trustees Mr. Robert Tudor (along with many others) indicated that one of Rice University’s key strengths is its ability to provide not only depth, but also breadth in educational opportunities;

Whereas, many Rice students matriculate to the University with undecided interests, multiple interests, or interests that may change;

Whereas, transfer students into Rice may need more classes to still complete the curriculum in four years if credits do not align.

Whereas, a significant proportion of Rice undergraduates change or add a major or minor to their intended major at matriculation;

Whereas, the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum put forth a “Proposal to change Registration Credit Hour Cap from 20 to 18”;

Whereas, many categories of students will be disadvantaged by the lack of opportunity a lowered credit-hour cap will cause; some of their backgrounds will include:

- Low-income (due to the potential for the necessity of additional years of study)
- Academically disadvantaged (like those without AP credit or those who would benefit from programs like RESP)
- Multiple-major or dual-degree candidates
- Changes-of-major
- Addition of minors or co-curricular opportunities
- On/off-campus work opportunities
- Leadership or service opportunities
- Students of majors with already-high credit hour requirements (e.g., Engineering, though, notably, Architecture and Music students are exempt as-proposed);

Whereas, only 6.4% of students complete a semester with more than 18 credit hours, this equates to half of all students (on average) needing to complete at least one semester with this credit-load;

Whereas, this 12.8% of students (on an annualized--or as the CUC may prefer, a fiscal year basis) accounts for over 500 students per academic year;

Whereas, this opportunity to take an increased course-load that Rice students pay for with tuition increases (with a compound annual growth rate of 4.2% and a total increase of 55% over the last 10 fiscal years);

Whereas, Dean Hutchinson has stated (and reiterated) that Rice provides a “four-year [academic] program”;

Whereas, the Proposal was initially presented primarily as a “student wellness and wellbeing issue,” but the CUC primarily was concerned with course capacity, student drop deadlines, resource allocation and over-extended teaching requirements, lost professorial work, and the breaking of in-course student bonds;

Whereas, the Survey of All Students (SUS) has information on student wellbeing, academic course-load and perspective on Rice academics, which, coupled with course-load data would indicate that there is clearly not a majority of students whose wellbeing issues are caused by course-loads over 18 hours;

Whereas, the timeline for this Proposal was timed such that opportunities for student input served the CUC's interests (but neither the Student Senate's or student body's interests) despite CUC Chair Susan McIntosh's plea to students for input at the vote, the objections of more than a dozen Faculty Senators (some of whom voted in favor of the motion on the technicality that their majors were sufficiently appeased by changes in the 12 hours preceding the final passage of the Proposal), and the objections of more than 150 students in attendance at the Faculty Senate meeting on April 20, 2016;

Whereas, the current proposal falls far short of comprehensive reforms that would aid students' well-being, academic success, academic advising support, major requirements, credit hour requirements, school of study-specific interests, or concerns for specific, at-risk populations without significantly curtailing their ability to define their own areas of study;

Whereas, 87% of the undergraduate student body surveyed is opposed to the original CUC Proposal prior to its changes; The Senate does therefore find it

Resolved, that the Student Association agrees with the CUC and the Faculty Senate that the broader Rice community needs reforms to existing course-load, wellbeing, course availability, and resource allocation;

Resolved, that the Student Association censures the Faculty Senate for:

- the passage of this CUC Proposal,
- failure to provide sufficient time for input or field sufficient feedback from students in this measure,
- failure to work with the Student Association leadership and the general student body to define a package of academic reforms that address not only student wellbeing, but also broader concerns about the academic loads Rice students opt into, and
- failure to address pre-existing faculty concerns about the add/drop deadline or teaching course loads, student commitment to course registration, or academic advising guidelines for dropping courses after the add-deadline;

Resolved, that the Student Association requests that President Leebron and Provost Miranda decline the advice of the Faculty Senate in this matter (pursuant to section I, paragraph III of the Constitution of the Rice University Faculty Senate);

Resolved, that the Student Association requests a vote of the entire faculty to affirm or deny this Proposal as written (pursuant to section V, paragraph II of the Constitution of the Rice University Faculty Senate), and that the Student Association further recommends the circulation of a petition to this effect; and,

Resolved, that the Student Association requests that President Leebron, Provost Miranda, the Dean of Undergraduates, and the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum convene a working group, complete with *sufficient student representation* and *time for public comment*, to address these issues on which much of the campus agrees need serious thought and remediation.