



- Requiring only 120 credit hours (see Appendix II), will keep NMSU consistent with peer institutions who all have a 120 credit graduate pathway, thus eliminating a potential disadvantage when recruiting students.
- Several NMSU majors examined include in their description of required courses a phrase to the effect of “and sufficient credits to bring the total to 128.” This indicates that there are majors at NMSU that would benefit from this change.
- Allowing, but not *requiring*, the minimum number of credit hours for a major to be reduced, ensures that no program will potentially face accreditation issues or be required to decrease the depth, breadth, and/or rigor of the major as defined by the faculty.

In addition to these points, a recent national study<sup>1</sup> of 8 Universities (2 Research Universities having “high research activity” with 18,000-28,000 total student enrollment; the other 6 were Master’s Universities with 3,000-20,000 total student enrollment) came up with the following key findings (portions copied from the cited report):

- *All credit hour reductions aim to standardize academic program majors at 120 credit hours. All contacts report that program learning outcomes should take precedence over the number of required credit hours and that 120 credit hours is typically enough to provide students with the appropriate outcomes.*
- *Credit reduction programs at most institutions allow academic program majors to exceed 120 credit hours only for accreditation or certification. The most common exceptions to credit reduction programs are engineering, health sciences (e.g., nursing, respiratory care, etc.), and music education, which typically range between 130 and 150 credit hours. However, several contacts note that most accrediting bodies do not explicitly mandate a certain number of credit hours; rather, they require that students demonstrate appropriate learning outcomes for the discipline. As such, administrators at University E<sup>2</sup> required all programs, accredited or not, to reduce their program requirements to 120 credit hours; contacts there report that several accrediting bodies recently visited the institution and made no recommendations for improvement.*
- *Administrators at University F<sup>3</sup> incentivized a credit reduction program by providing units that reduced their credit requirements with \$10,000 dollars in unrestricted funds. Administrators also identified faculty program facilitators, whom were paid \$10,000 dollars for 18 months of work with academic units, consulting on the credit reduction and monitoring curricular changes. Contacts recommend that these faculty facilitators are better received by academic units than external consultants.*
- *Credit reductions across all contact institutions took place within the last three years, so data regarding the reductions’ effects on recruitment, retention,*

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<sup>1</sup> Luke Maher and Lisa Geraci, “Strategies to Reduce Credit Hour Requirements in Academic Program Majors,” The Advisory Board Company, Washington, D.C., 2012.

<sup>2</sup> University E was identified as a southern Master’s University with a total enrollment of 4200.

<sup>3</sup> University F was identified as a western Master’s University with a total enrollment of 20,000.

*graduation, and cost is not yet available; however, University E<sup>2</sup> has realized enough cost savings in the previous two years to fund eight new faculty lines.*

## Appendix I – Proposed Changes to the NMSU Undergraduate Catalog

The proposed changes to the NMSU Undergraduate Catalog are shown below; deleted language is given in ~~red-strikethrough~~ font and additions are given in red font. In addition to the explicit change in the number of credit hours, additional language is included to clarify that some majors require more than this. Note that it will be necessary to correct the credit hour ranges as majors respond to this legislation.

### Graduation Requirements

For the baccalaureate degree, each student must complete a minimum of ~~42~~120 credit hours including at least 48 credits numbered 300 or above. ~~However, to satisfy the requirements of accreditation, licensure, program depth or rigor, or other needs, some majors require coursework in excess of the 120 credit hour minimum. Program waivers require the approval of the Academic Deans' Council.~~ However, to satisfy the requirements of accreditation, licensure, program depth or rigor, or other needs, some majors require coursework in excess of the 120 credit hour minimum.

Each college has its own requirements for graduation listed under its curricula. However, there are certain graduation requirements common to all undergraduate colleges:

- A student must have a cumulative GPA of 2.0 in all courses taken at NMSU.
- The student will be required to show proficiency in written English in all class work at the university. Any instructor may remand a student to the English remedial laboratory for further training in written English. In each case, the student must complete the remedial laboratory work prior to submitting the application to graduate.
- Each student must complete at NMSU at least 30 of the last 36 credits necessary for the baccalaureate degree. Of these 36 credits, 21 credits must be upper division and at least 12 of these upper division credits must be in the major. Colleges or Departments may require that more than 12 of the upper division credits be from the major, and they may direct that certain of these credits be course specific.
- Curricular requirements for a specific degree may be met by completing all of the course requirements for that degree as set forth in the catalog of matriculation provided that the selected catalog is not more than six years old when the requirements for graduation are met. This rule applies only to the course requirements and number of credits as specified for the degree. In all other cases, the current catalog is effective. The catalog is effective Summer Session I through Spring Semester.

## Appendix II – Peer Institution Credit Hour Requirements

A review of the minimum credit hour requirements at NMSU's peer institutions was completed in December 2014. The review was conducted by examination of the institution's on-line undergraduate catalog and program descriptions. The review included not only the minimum requirements of the institution, but also majors selected to represent all the colleges at NMSU and to be common enough that most of the peer institutions would offer similar majors. The NMSU degrees and majors selected were:

College of Agriculture, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences

- Agricultural Economics (Bachelor of Science in Agriculture)

College of Arts and Sciences

- Biology (Bachelor of Science)
- Chemistry (Bachelor of Science)
- English (Bachelor of Arts)
- History (Bachelor of Arts)

College of Business

- Finance (Bachelor of Business Administration)

College of Education

- Secondary Education (Bachelor of Science in Education)

College of Engineering

- Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering
- Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering

College of Human and Social Services

- Bachelor of Social Work

A summary table of the credit hour requirements for these majors is given in Table 1 below. From the data in Table 1, the following observations can be made:

1. All of NMSU's Peer Institutions require 120 credit hours as their minimum.
2. At most of the Peer Institutions, the Biology, Chemistry, English, History, Finance, and Social Work majors all require 120-123 credit hours as the minimum, i.e. they are within one class of the institutional minimum requirement.
3. At approximately half of the Peer Institutions the Secondary Education major requires 120-123 credit hours. The most credit hours required for this major is 128 at Montana State University, excluding Oregon State University which only offers a Secondary Education major as a second major for students who have completed an initial major in the subject they plan to teach.
4. At none of the Peer Institutions were the engineering majors completed with less than 124 credit hours. The engineering majors required between 124 and 136 credit hours, i.e. 1 to 4 classes more than the minimum.

Institution	Minimum Credits to Graduate	ACES	Arts and Sciences				Business	Education	Engineering		HSS
		BSA Ag Econ	BS Biology	BS Chemistry	BA English	BA History	BBA Finance	Secondary Education	BS Civil Engr.	BS Mech. Engr.	Social Work
New Mexico State University	128	128	128 <sup>4</sup>	128 <sup>4</sup>	128 <sup>5</sup>	128 <sup>4</sup>	128 <sup>4</sup>	132	135	132	128 <sup>6</sup>
Colorado State University	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	130	129	120
Iowa State University	120	120	120	120	120	120	122	128	128	130	
Kansas State University	120	127	120	120	120	120	126	125	128	127	120
Montana State University	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	128	128	128	
Oklahoma State University	120	120	120	120	120	123	120	124	136	124	121
Oregon State University <sup>7</sup>	120(180)	120(180)	120(180)	120(180)	120(180)		120(180)	150(225?) <sup>8</sup>	122(183)	120(180)	
Texas Tech - Lubbock	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120+	129	129	120
University of Arizona	120	121	120	120	121	123	120	125	132	130	
University of Idaho	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	128	128	
University of Nevada - Reno	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	129	126	120
University of New Mexico	120		123	120	120	121	128 <sup>9</sup>	123	129	130	
University of Texas at El Paso	120		120	120	120	120	120	120	128	128	120
Utah State University	120	120	120	122	120	120	120	120?	128	126	120
Washington State University	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	121	127	125	
University of Wyoming	120	121	120(?)	121	120(?)	122	122		132	128	120

Table 1. Minimum Credit Hours at NMSU Peer Institutions for Selected Majors (empty cells indicate that major was not offered/ found at that institution or the number of required credits wasn't easily determined).

<sup>4</sup> Includes the phrase "Sufficient to bring total credits to 128, including 48 upper-division credits" or something similar.

<sup>5</sup> For "Emphasis: English"; includes 9 400-level unspecified English electives.

<sup>6</sup> Includes the phrase "Electives must be sufficient to bring total credits to 128, including 54 upper-division credits, for graduation."

<sup>7</sup> Numbers in parentheses are the quarter hour credits required, the semester hours were calculated as 2/3 of the quarter hours.

<sup>8</sup> Only offers a 5-year "Double Degree" program with one degree in education and another major in a discipline-specific field of study.

<sup>9</sup> Includes at least 21 "free" electives.