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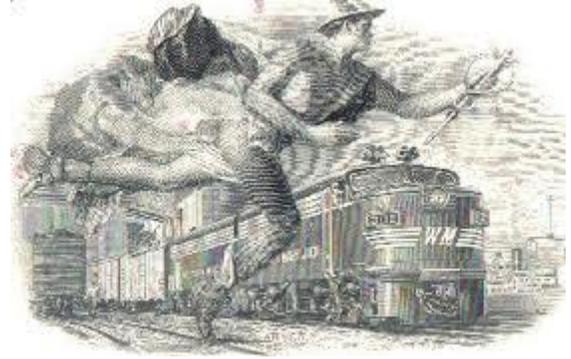
# Worried about “credit creep” legislation? Improve Access and Degree Completion with Mission Driven, Market Smart Approach

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# Improve Access and Degree Completion with Mission Driven, Market Smart Approach

If we had been paying more attention, we could have stopped the “credit creep” legislative train before it left the station. And, it was our job to do so.

The Indiana State legislature recently jumped into the “credit creep” locomotion through HB 1200, which establishes limits on the number of credit hours that can be required for academic majors and minors, unless the university is granted an exception by the Commission for Higher Education.



Indiana is not the first (or likely to be the last) state whose elected officials want to set limits on credit-for-degree requirements. Like most academics, I find “legislative creep” into curricular design unsettling. However, I truly understand how and why well-intended people could frame these efforts as an attempt to allocate resources wisely, while at the same time improving college retention and degree completion rates.

Because academics across the country were slow to switch tracks and stop the escalating costs associated with curricular glut, we benignly invited intervention and let the “stop credit creep” movement become a runaway train.

As academics, we lament the rising cost of tuition at public institutions and talk about how tuition costs threaten access and degree completion, particularly for first generation college students.

As academics, we lament the rising cost of tuition at private institutions and talk with concern about funding access, diversity, and quality within a tuition-based budget model that is unlikely to be sustainable.

But, as academics, we also own the curriculum. We have discipline-prepared expertise and are uniquely qualified to design major programs and the courses that support them. Yet, too often, we focus on the broad aspects of “what we want to teach”, when we should be shifting our focus to “what students need to learn.

We talked about these kinds of things at the Academic Chairperson’s Conference in Orlando last week, when I facilitated a workshop on how important it is for academic department leaders to be both Mission-Driven and Market-Smart.

Some see being “mission-driven” and “market-smart” as mutually exclusive. But, I see these approaches as inextricably linked. Institutional mission statements certainly articulate the distinct characteristics of that college experience. However, all mission statements that I know

about are either implicitly or explicitly grounded in a commitment to student development and success. So, in the most fundamental sense, for all of us, the heart of our mission pumps access, retention, degree completion and job or graduate school placement.

And, of course, we can't keep that pulse going if we don't offer quality programs that employ high impact practices and produce the essential learning outcomes identified by employers and graduate schools. These programs attract students and help them see the value of completing a college education.

But, we cannot not forget our obligation to creatively design curricula that our institutions (public and private) can afford to fund and that students can afford to complete.

This is not our problem.....it is our job. And, if we don't do it ourselves, we will be forced to do it by legislative mandates at public institutions or top-down, budget-driven program review at private institutions.

Wouldn't you rather conduct the Credit Requirement Express train yourself? I know I would.