



New College

THE HONORS COLLEGE of Florida

Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

September 30, 2011

TO: Board of Governors

FROM: Stephen Miles, Provost, New College of Florida

RE: Bachelor of Arts at New College of Florida

The Bachelor of Arts degree at New College requires the completion of the equivalent of a minimum of 124 Credit Hours. New College of Florida is a rigorous honors program which includes individualized study, innovative pedagogy, narrative evaluations, undergraduate senior thesis, and a baccalaureate exam.

New College requests an exception to the 120 credit hour to degree regulation for this degree. Rule 8.014 (1) c. states that programs with these features may be approved for greater than 120 credit hours.

Background for New College of Florida's Request for Exception to the 120 Credit Hours Requirement under Rule 8.014

October 7, 2011

New College Program Requirements

The requirements for the New College of Florida Bachelor of Arts degree are:

- Seven satisfactory semester contracts
- Satisfactory completion of the Liberal Arts Curriculum requirements (General Education), including: study in a broad range of subjects; basic proficiency in information technology, mathematics, and English language; and advanced proficiency in written and oral English language
- The satisfactory completion of 31 units (a unit being equivalent to a full semester course or ISP)
- Three satisfactory Independent Study Projects (ISPs)
- A satisfactory senior project or thesis
- A satisfactory baccalaureate examination (usually in the form of an oral defense of the senior project)
- Meeting the coursework and project requirements of an Area of Concentration (Major), as specified in the General Catalog

Unique Nature of New College Academic Program:

Students make progress toward graduation by satisfactorily completing semester contracts and independent study projects. Students do not earn grades instead they receive narrative evaluations of their academic work. Students do not accumulate credit hours.

Narrative Evaluation

For every course or project a student undertakes for transcript entry or as part of requirements towards graduation (the Senior Thesis, the Baccalaureate Examination) the student will receive a narrative evaluation. The written evaluation should include: a brief description of the course, tutorial, or independent work; a summary evaluation of the work; and a designation of the student's performance as "satisfactory," "unsatisfactory," or "incomplete." Incomplete evaluations must specify a deadline for completion.

The Contract

The contract system is the heart of the New College educational program. At the beginning of each semester, each student works out a program of study for the semester with his or her faculty sponsor, who is chosen by the student and who agrees to sponsor the student. The contract, drawn up jointly by the student and sponsor, includes: a statement of educational objectives; a list of courses, tutorials, and other academic undertakings to be taken, totaling at least three units (a unit being equivalent to a full semester course) for transcript entry; a description of otherwise undefined projects to be undertaken; and a statement of criteria (e.g., number of satisfactory course evaluations) to be met in order that the contract be certified as satisfactory at the end of the semester

The Independent Study Project

The ISP requirement addresses four educational objectives:

- to help students learn to conduct independent research

Background for New College of Florida's Request for Exception to the 120 Credit Hours Requirement under Rule 8.014

October 7, 2011

- to supplement the curriculum and to encourage off-campus study
- to provide an opportunity for non-traditional, innovative, experiential learning projects, and
- to allow a time for intensive involvement with one subject or activity.

A student chooses a topic in consultation with a faculty member who agrees to become the ISP sponsor. Projects may be carefully defined at the beginning, or left open-ended and exploratory. The content and demands should be roughly equivalent to that of a term-length tutorial. A full-time, four-week academic activity, usually completed during the January Interterm, three ISPs are required for graduation. A student may register for a fourth ISP.

Senior Thesis or Project

Students in their final year at New College are required to complete a senior thesis or project. Each New College graduate is expected to possess strong writing skills, and the completed project should satisfactorily demonstrate his or her ability to express ideas and information in writing. It also provides the basis for the oral baccalaureate examination. Work on the senior thesis/project is normally spread over the last two semesters before graduation and is normally included in those contracts. The sponsor must submit a formal written evaluation of the thesis/project. Each senior project shall be accompanied by an abstract or, where appropriate, a brief description, of approximately 200 words. The abstract or description shall be considered as an integral part of the thesis or project.

Baccalaureate Examination

The faculty has agreed on the following description of the baccalaureate examination: "The baccalaureate examination is logically the final requirement for graduation, coming normally in the final term and presupposing the completion of the senior thesis/project and the substantial completion of the area of concentration. The faculty as a whole will make the final certification that all requirements for graduation have been met. The examination represents the collegial responsibility of the faculty that no student may graduate until the quality of his/her educational achievement has been closely examined and approved by three faculty members. Each New College graduate is expected to possess strong oral communication skills. Therefore, a student's ability to express ideas and information orally is assessed as part of the baccalaureate examination evaluation process."

The baccalaureate examination usually includes a defense of the thesis or project, an examination in the area of concentration, and an examination of the student's education in general. A student's senior thesis/project committee, which is also the Baccalaureate Committee, is generally understood to include a senior thesis sponsor and at least two other faculty members, all of whom have signed the Thesis Prospectus/Area of Concentration form on file in the Office of the Registrar.

Background for New College of Florida's Request for Exception to the 120 Credit Hours Requirement under Rule 8.014

October 7, 2011

How the New College Academic Program Aligns with Credit Hours

1 unit = 4 semester hour equivalents

New College is the Honors College for the State of Florida and instructors have high expectations for student outcomes. Established performance norms are also high. Each New College Independent Study Project, and each semester-long course, tutorial, and Independent Reading Project is assigned 1 unit. For a modular (half semester) educational activity, ½ unit is assigned.

1 semester contract is equivalent to 16 semester hours

1 Independent Study Project is equivalent to 4 semester hours

Minimum Requirements for a New College Bachelor of Arts Degree are:

7 contracts @ 16 semester hours equivalent each = 112 semester hour equivalent

3 ISPs @ 4 semester hours equivalent each = 12 semester hour equivalent

Why does New College need this exception?

The New College academic program and the credit hour equivalencies described above have been in place since we joined the SUS as a college of the University of South Florida in 1975. These credit hours equivalencies have also been the basis for calculating tuition and transfer credit since 1975. They accurately represent the level of academic effort required to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in the unique honors undergraduate program at New College. These New College practices preceded adoption of Rule 8.014 in 2007. Confirming the minimum requirement of 124 credit hours in addition to Rule 8.014 provides another level of definitive documentation, especially when working with Florida Prepaid representatives as well as NCF students and their parents regarding degree requirements in excess of 120 hours. Reducing the credit hour equivalency to 120 credit hours would significantly disrupt our academic program, our financial aid agreements, and transfer credit policy.