

**Recommendation of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee  
Ad Hoc Committee on Four-Credit Courses and Curricula  
February 22, 1010**

**Background and Rationale**

The Executive Committee is aware that four credit courses and curricula are being designed or explored in many departments and colleges. The chairs of the College of Arts and Sciences have agreed (August 2009) to re-evaluate their curricula and explore the feasibility of reconstruction to an overall four-credit model within departments. The Deans of other colleges have agreed to ask departments to make these considerations as well. We realize that the retention of students is a high priority goal of URI and agree that it is necessary to take action.

Many minor course change proposals and new course proposals are moving through the faculty governance process, adding to the more than 180 separate course titles that were already in our catalog. While faculty curriculum committees are being careful to guard academic quality for individual courses and more broadly for program curricula, no formal group of faculty on campus considering university-wide implications for faculty, students, and programs. While we know of possible benefits to students, we realize there may be some disadvantages as well. There are concerns for changes in faculty teaching assignments. Changes in general education courses and service courses given by one department have broad effects on other programs. The proportion of four-credit courses is growing. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee thinks that a faculty body should explore these issues and advise the Senate on policies for transition and implementation of a curriculum based on a substantially greater preponderance of 4-credit courses. Therefore, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee recommends that an Ad Hoc Committee on a Four-Credit Courses and Curricula be created.

**Recommendation**

**Ad Hoc Committee on Four-Credit Courses and Curricula**

FSEC moves to create an Ad Hoc Committee with the following charge:

The Charge

- Gather information about steps that have been taken at URI to facilitate faculty assessment and decision-making about the process of moving toward a four-credit curriculum.
- Identify whether any case studies exist from other universities regarding experiences, gains, and losses in moving to or from a 4-credit system or a mixture of 4-credit and 3-credit courses, and make any such studies available to URI faculty.
- Decide what the main issues of concern are, within the three categories of effects on faculty teaching assignments, effects on student learning (breadth and depth), and effects that program changes would have on other programs.
- Address each concern by exploring the advantages and disadvantages of change to a four-credit curriculum or mixed two, three, four, and five-credit curriculum. To the extent practical, support assessments of advantages and disadvantages with

reference to documented case studies or systematic, data-based assessments of experiences elsewhere.

- Propose solutions to the issues raised and define goals.
- Create a Q&A forum.
- Provide opportunities for faculty members to weigh in and exchange information and opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of a move toward a new curriculum.
- Determine a list of actions or policies recommended by the faculty as a result of this study that may address broader issues, beyond a four-credit curriculum.
- Create a document, "Four-Credit Courses and Curricula for URI: The Faculty Perspective", which the Ad Hoc Committee will present to the Faculty Senate in May 2010. At that time the committee may be asked to continue its work during the academic year 2010-2011.

#### The Membership

(At least 8 faculty members representative of colleges and disciplines