

SRAP Targeted Action Group (TAG) Project: “Course Credit Requirement for Graduation and Reduction/Reallocation of Faculty FTE”

Project context and purpose:

Students at St. Olaf are required to complete 35 course credits to graduate with either a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Music degree. Essentially, students must carry full loads for 8 semesters (32 credits) and complete three interim courses (3 credits). By comparison, many of our peer institutions require the equivalent of 32 credits to graduate. The Instructional SRAP group report identified the number of credits required for graduation as an area of resource allocation that merited review. The Instructional SRAP group also identified opportunities to reallocate some faculty resources across the academic program.

TAG team members:

- Mary Walczak, Associate Dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Professor of Chemistry, Project Manager
- Dan Hofrenning, Professor of Political Science, Faculty Governance Committee chair and current SRAP Steering Committee member
- Kent McWilliams, Professor of Music, Associate Dean of Fine Arts
- Jon Naito, Associate Professor of English, Curriculum Committee chair
- Paul Roback, Professor of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science
- Colin Wells, Professor of English, Associate Dean of Humanities

Project objectives:

The TAG Team is charged with reviewing the allocation of student and faculty time and college resources through the number of credits required for graduation and in light of (1) changes in the college’s strategic vision for a high quality educational experience that includes enhanced access to enriched and high-impact experiences such as internships, mentored undergraduate research, learning communities, off-campus study, advising, improved student-faculty interactions, and or the needs of a new GE, and (2) changes in student demand for existing programs and interest in new curricular programs. A short-term outcome could free up resources for the transition from one GE model to another, after which the resources might be allocated “permanently” to other curricular purposes.

The TAG Team should use the Instructional SRAP group’s report as a starting point to explore models for freeing up FTE for reallocation to new or existing programs, and identifying a modest, and lesser, amount of FTE for overall budget savings.

Key project resources

- IRE personnel
- Information about departments and programs that build in a variety of research experiences or the DUR into their offerings;
- Information about internship reflection seminars, recent changes to the assignment of credit to internships, the proportion of credit-bearing and non-credit bearing internships;
- GE Task Force reports and findings;

- SRAP reports for departments and programs;
- Information about our strategic comparison institutions;
- Admissions information about student interest, potential revenue implications
- SRAP recommendation box;
- Advising Task Force report;
- Detailed report and data collection completed by the Instructional SRAP Task Force.

Assumptions distinctive to this project: In addition to the assumptions guiding all TAG projects, this project assumes the following:

- The educational experience of students may change, but its quality shall not diminish.
- The Curriculum Committee and the GE Task Force remain in charge of leading the review and revision of the General Education requirements, while the TAG Team exercise will help identify potential resource allocations that can support a new GE.
- The faculty has primary responsibility for the curriculum; that responsibility is fulfilled through departments and programs, the Curriculum Committee, the Faculty Governance Committee (should there be a significant planning element), and Associate Deans of the Faculties (particularly regarding staff planning) and the Provost. Any changes in the requirements for graduation or the establishment of new programs, for example, will proceed through normal governance channels.
- Freeing up faculty FTE along the lines that the Instructional SRAP group thought possible will call for some modest inter-department shifts. No change will require the immediate deletion of tenured lines, though over time, some departments and programs may experience “right-sizing” through retirements.
- The value of the interim term is clear, particularly for opportunities to study abroad and for students who thrive in a “one-course-at-a-time” environment.

Intended project timeline:

Given the need to consult with standing committees, the TAG Team will revisit and adjust the timeline regularly.

- Refined charge and scope: Nov. 2, 2018
- Deliverables 4-8: Dec. 6, 2018
- Deliverable 9: Jan. 20, 2019
- Deliverables 10-11: April 10, 2019