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SENATE, No. 1265
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
218th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 25, 2018

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Assemblywoman MILA M. JASEY

District 27 (Essex and Morris)

Assemblywoman NANCY J. PINKIN

District 18 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Pou

SYNOPSIS

Provides that no more than 120 credits will be required for baccalaureate degree awarded by public institution and no more than 60 credits for associate degree.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT concerning associate and baccalaureate degree programs and supplementing chapter 62 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any section of law to the contrary and except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection b. of this section, beginning with students who initially enroll in a baccalaureate degree program in the fall semester of 2019, the standard number of credits required for the award of a baccalaureate degree from a four-year public institution of higher education is 120 credit hours.

b. The standard number of credit hours established pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall not apply if:

(1) the degree program is defined as a five-year degree program;

(2) professional accreditation requires a greater number of credit hours or requires course work that cannot be completed in 120 credits; or

(3) certification requirements result in a need for credit hours in excess of 120.

c. (1) The Secretary of Higher Education shall establish standards for the purposes of complying with the credit hour limit established by this section for institutions of higher education that use nontraditional course credit systems.

(2) Within 180 days of the effective date of this act, a four-year public institution of higher education that uses a nontraditional course credit system shall submit a written request to the secretary for permission to comply with the credit hour limit in accordance with the standards established by the secretary pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection. The request shall provide information on why the institution is not able to comply with the requirements of subsection a. of this section and shall include such other information as the secretary deems necessary. Within 60 days of the submission of the request, the secretary shall advise the institution on whether it may meet the credit hour limit in accordance with the standards established by the secretary.

2. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any section of law to the contrary and except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection b. of this section, beginning with students who initially enroll in an associate degree program in the fall semester of 2019, the standard number of credit hours required for the award of an associate degree from a county college is 60 credit hours.

b. The standard number of credit hours established pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall not apply if:

(1) the degree program is defined as more than a two-year degree program;

(2) professional accreditation requires a greater number of credit hours or requires course work that cannot be completed in 60 credits; or

(3) certification requirements result in a need for credit hours in excess of 60.

c. (1) The Secretary of Higher Education shall establish standards for the purposes of complying with the credit hour limit established by this section for institutions of higher that use nontraditional course credit systems.

(2) Within 180 days of the effective date of this act, a county college that uses a nontraditional course credit system shall submit a written request to the secretary for permission to comply with the credit hour limit in accordance with the standards

established by the secretary pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection. The request shall provide information on why the county college is not able to comply with the requirements of subsection a. of this section and shall include such other information as the secretary deems necessary. Within 60 days of the submission of the request, the secretary shall advise the county college on whether it may meet the credit hour limit in accordance with the standards established by the secretary.

3. The governing board of a public institution of higher education, in consultation with the Secretary of Higher Education, may approve exceptions to the credit hour requirements in addition to those established pursuant to subsection b. of sections 1 and 2 of this act.

4. Within 60 days of the effective date of this act and annually thereafter, the secretary shall submit a report to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), on the number of four-year public institutions of higher education and county colleges that are in compliance with the provisions of this act. __

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill provides that the standard number of credits required for the award of a baccalaureate degree by a public institution of higher education, beginning with students who initially enter the institution in the fall semester of 2019, will be 120 credit hours, and in the case of the award of an associate degree by a county college, 60 credit hours.

The bill stipulates that the standard number of credit hours will not apply if the degree program is defined as a five-year degree program in the case of a four-year institution or more than a two-year degree program in the case of a county college. The standard number of credit hours also will not apply if professional accreditation requires a greater number of credit hours or requires course work that cannot be completed within those credit hours, or if certification requirements result in a need for additional credit hours.

The bill requires the Secretary of Higher Education to establish standards for the purposes of complying with the credit hour limits established by the bill for institutions of higher education that use nontraditional course credit systems. Within 180 days of the bill's effective date, a four-year public institution or a county college that uses a nontraditional course credit system is required to submit a written request to the secretary for permission to comply with the credit hour limit in accordance with the standards established by the secretary. Within 60 days of the written request, the secretary will advise the institution on whether the institution may meet the credit hour limit in accordance with those standards.

The bill authorizes the governing board of a public institution, in consultation with the secretary, to approve additional exceptions to the bill's standard credit hour requirements.

The bill directs the secretary to submit a report, within 60 days of the bill's effective date and annually thereafter, to the Governor and the Legislature on the number of four-year institutions of higher education and county colleges that are in compliance with the bill's provisions.

The bill is scheduled to take effect immediately upon enactment.