

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

November 27, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Steering Committee
FROM: June Pierce Youatt, Acting Provost
RE: Option to Declare a Major at 28 credits

I seek endorsement of a change in academic policy that would allow – but not require – students who have earned at least 28 credits to elect an academic major.

As you know, currently only students enrolled in the College of Music and the residential colleges are allowed to declare a major with less than 56 credits. The College of Engineering permits admission with fewer than 56 credits IF the student has met all requirements for admission.

Advising and academic actions for other students with fewer than 56 credits has been the responsibility of the Undergraduate University Division (UUD) advisors. Practically, even if students had a major preference and were obtaining academic advice from the academic unit of their major preference, they were required to seek the assistance of UUD for all academic-related actions. The proposed change in policy would have implications for advising as it is anticipated that many units would assume responsibility for academic advising for students earlier in their academic careers (as early as 28 credits). The Office of the Provost acknowledges the potential need for additional resources to the colleges, with this policy change.

The revised policy would

- Allow admission to limited enrollment programs to students when ready – admission when all prerequisite requirements were fulfilled
- Allow admission to other majors (other than limited enrollment majors) by students who have earned a minimum of 28 credits
- retain the current admissions practices for the College of Music and the residential colleges
- NOT require declaration of a major by the student until 56 credits
- NOT require a unit which currently has a limit on enrollment to the major to admit before 56 credits



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Discussions over the last several years have explored the advantages for some students of declaring a major earlier in their academic careers and the desirability to colleges of earlier engaging students as majors. There is some evidence that earlier engagement and alignment with colleges has a positive impact on both retention and time to graduation.

The proposed changes would allow students who are ready to declare a major to do so. It would also provide the option of delaying the decision to 56 credits, which allows time for academic exploration and attainment of prerequisite preparation for some majors.

Most colleges would assume academic responsibility for students at the end of first – rather than the second – year. The Office of the Provost has been working with colleges to assure readiness to provide the academic support students need for retention, academic success, and timely graduation.

The proposed change in University policy is expected to have positive outcomes for students who are ready to move into their majors and for colleges that are anxious to provide the primary academic guidance to these students. At the same time, the policy allows students who need additional time to explore options or to complete requirements for limited enrollment majors to do so.

Upon academic governance approval, all relevant academic catalog language will be modified to reflect the new 28 credit policy change.