

To: Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC)  
From: Susie Steinbach, Director of University Honors  
Re: Proposal to reduce Breadth of Study (BoS) requirements  
Date: October 17, 2012

Dear UCC:

I am so pleased that we are committing significant energies during AY 2012 and AY 2013 to revising the Hamline Plan (HP). My work on one of the HP subcommittees (devoted to the 'Q'), and my work on University Honors (UH), including Departmental Honors Projects (DHP), has led me to reflect broadly and deeply on the HP, and to consult with a wide array of stakeholders about our curriculum.

I write to propose a revision that has not yet been proposed: a reduction in the BoS requirement. I propose that we reduce the BoS requirement from the current level of 84 credits outside of each major to 76 credits outside of each major.

I first began to reflect on the BoS requirement whilst revising our DHP requirements. DHPs now earn students six credits in their majors, rather than four. Several faculty argued that this would create BoS difficulties for some students in their majors, who would want to do DHPs but would now find themselves two credits short of BoS compliance. While I am not convinced of the pervasiveness of this situation, I did begin to consider the BoS requirement. I have concluded that we can and should reduce it.

First, we should note that BoS can be reduced without negative effects on the curriculum. The purpose of the BoS requirement is to ensure that students do not become overly specialized, and that they take courses in a range of subjects. In pursuit of this goal BoS, while important, is a secondary line of defense. It supports the Disciplinary Breadth requirement, which ensures a wide-ranging education in a more specific way. The BoS is therefore open to adjustment without negative effects on the curriculum. Reducing the BoS requirement from 84 credits to 76 credits (which for most students will mean a reduction from 21 four-credit classes to 19 four-credit classes) will not affect the nature, meaning, or intent of the BoS requirement. Students will still be required to take a significant number of classes outside of any major, and will still be prevented from over-specializing in any one academic area. We would not be compromising the function in BoS in any way. Last spring I met with Katie Adams, Director for the Center for Academic Services, who confirmed my view that the proposed reduction would not significantly alter our curriculum.

Furthermore, a reduction in BoS would be helpful to students in at least four areas. The first group are those students who want to do a DHP but find that this would now leave them with only 76-82 credits outside of a major. The second group are students in HSB majors that require a high number of credits. For example, Accounting majors need to take 19 courses in the major, only four of which count for BoS, for a total of 56 credits in the major and without BoS. To achieve 84 credits outside the major, they need to complete 140 credits, a full 12 credits more than are otherwise required for graduation, simply because of BoS. Accounting students and instructors, as well as the HSB Dean and the HSB Undergraduate Curriculum & Assessment Committee (UCAC), find this requirement onerous and lacking sufficient rationale. As you know, I have already obtained HSB UCAC support for this proposal. The third group are many majors in the Natural Sciences division that require a high number of credits. For example, students pursuing a BS in Chemistry need 54 credits in the major and without BoS, so a total of 138 credits, or 10 credits more than are otherwise required for graduation. The fourth group are

students in many majors in the Fine Arts division that require a high number of credits. Students who major in music need many courses in the major—18 to 22—some of which are currently given or 0 credits because of BoS. The Fine Arts faculty are supportive of this proposal (please consult with UCC member and Fine Arts faculty Janet Greene for more on this).

Overall, I believe that we can and should reduce the BoS requirement from 84 to 76 credits outside of each major. This change would have positive effects for some students and programs, without negative effects for any students or programs. I hope you will consider my proposal. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Susie Steinbach  
Director of University Honors