

## **OP-ED: Controlling Credit Creep Helps Students Complete College**

Among the many pieces of legislation under consideration by Indiana lawmakers this session is House Bill 1220, also known as the “credit creep” bill. If passed, HB 1220 would help Indiana students graduate on-time by not requiring excessive credits to earn a degree.

The historical standard was once 120 credit hours for a bachelor’s degree and 60 credits for an associate degree. That’s four years of full-time attendance for a bachelor’s degree and two years for an associate degree. Yet, over the years credit requirements have steadily increased, and today nearly 90 percent of Indiana college degree programs exceed that standard.

I have sat through my fair share of courses as a biomedical engineering student at Purdue University, and I find it hard to believe that the quality of the degree I will receive this May would be compromised by removing a single elective course from my program. Though some degrees may justify more than the traditional 120 credit hours, colleges need to explain why any extra time or student expense is necessary.

In my time as student commissioner, I have learned to balance the needs of the universities, students and families, and the state. But, I've also learned that student success comes first. Students need to do their part to make smart choices, take their studies seriously and graduate on time. And, Indiana’s higher education system must work to remove arbitrary barriers, like excessive credit requirements, that get in the way.

Indiana will have more than 500,000 vacancies for jobs that require postsecondary credentials by 2018, and we’re expecting a critical shortage of qualified workers to fill those jobs if current trends continue. We must take advantage of every opportunity to meet our state’s economic and education goals.

Controlling credit creep is one common sense strategy to help college students finish faster and minimize debt. The stakes are too high to just sit back and wait.

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*Keith Hansen is a senior at Purdue University and the Student Representative on the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. He wrote this op-ed for Indiana newspapers.*