

## Radford University's New Credit Hour Policy is Unfair

By: Mercedes Loescher

Radford University's new credit hour policy has been the focus of students. In the summer of 2019, it was decided by the board members of RU that they are going to decrease the amount of maximum credit hours students can take from 18 to 16. After you go over 16 credit hours, students will be charged extra for those hours.

This new policy affects not only current students, but also incoming students. RU froze its tuition last year and students breathed a sigh of relief. Over the summer, they decided to implement this policy and did not warn any of the students. The policy was intended to be used the 2019-2020 academic year, but there was enough up-roar about it that it got pushed back to the 2020-2021 academic year.

On Sep. 25, 2019, there was an open forum held on campus to discuss the new policy. This was organized by two RU students that had strong feelings about this new policy. A recurring theme from other students that attended the forum was affordability. Many shared stories about barely making ends meet and the burden of unexpected costs.

Ashlyn Wolfe is just one of the students that is affected deeply by this new policy. She is a junior communications major with a concentration in public relations and was set to graduate in May 2021. For her to graduate on time, she would have to take 18 credit hour semesters for the rest of her college career. This is now not possible for her.

“Due to Radford University’s new credit policy, I can no longer graduate on time,” Wolfe says. “I am having to find the time and money to take classes outside of Radford at a local community college close to my hometown over the summer just to stay on time and where I need to be for graduation. This shouldn’t have to be the case.”

The university officials say that this policy will better align student’s curriculum with expenses. RU’s Associate Vice President for University Relations Caitlyn Scaggs was one of them. She serves as chief communications officer and marketing strategist for RU. Scaggs oversees all aspects of the development and dissemination of public messages.

“Students taking additional credit hours generate additional costs for the university,” Scaggs says. “In lieu of charging all students greater levels of tuition and fees, this method allows for students taking more classes to pay the additional cost of their course load and related instruction.”

President Brian Hemphill became RU’s seventh president on July 1, 2016. Hemphill is known as a champion for positive change and a true advocate of shared governance. He wrote an address to the campus about the new policy stating that it would only affect 12% of the total student body. This did not settle well with students.

Hannah Stewart is a senior biology and psychology major in the honors college at RU. Stewart and another student were the ones that organized the open forum to discuss the new policy. She had a strong problem with the rationale that a small percentage made the policy acceptable.

“This policy discriminates against students who are following their passions and getting involved on their campus,” Stewart says.

“These students should be encouraged, not disincentivized. It hurts students planning to double-major, pursue a minor or participate in research and internships.”

With the new policy, the cost per a credit once students go over 16 credits is \$472. That is not feasible for most college students that rely on private loans or FASFA to pay for their tuition. A professor, Jake Fox, told *Roanoke Times* that the university has put together a subcommittee to discuss the policy and they hope to talk to administration to see if departments could possibly have time to rework majors so that students can graduate on time without the extra fees. They think that this will help diffuse the situation at hand and make students less upset.

Alayna Johnson is a sophomore at RU. She is an education major, a member of the honors college, and has a minor in Spanish. All of these things were affected by the credit changes deeply and she has a lot to say about the idea of them getting rid of certain classes on the curriculum.

“My major specifically requires over 18 credit semesters before my other commitments,” Johnson says. “When Radford froze tuition, I was thrilled. Then the new credit policy was introduced, and it was devastating. They are trying to water down the curriculum to meet the new requirements and I feel like my education is being compromised to support a policy I don’t believe should be implemented.”