Date: October 26, 2011
To: Members of the University Curriculum Committee
From: Provost and Executive Vice President Doug Baker
Subject: Credit Level Discussion

I want to address questions raised at the University Curriculum meeting Monday afternoon regarding the proposal to change the credits required for a baccalaureate degree to 120. This proposal comes to you after deliberations by the State Board of Education last year approving the lower credit limit for Boise State University after studying typical graduation requirements around the country. The majority of peers have a minimum degree requirement of 120 credits. In most of these universities, there is variability in the number of credits required for individual degrees, a practice consistent with this proposal. For example, our neighbors at Washington State University have long maintained 120 credit hours as a minimum graduation requirement.

I understand concern was expressed about an expectation that the University will compel programs to change to baccalaureate degrees with a maximum of 120 credits over the next several years. This is not the intention of the proposed change to Regulation J. It is important to maintain the quality and rigor of each of our degree programs to achieve our University and program learning outcomes and to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for success. Our faculty members are best prepared to provide curricular recommendations, and we understand the need and anticipate actions that will result in curricula that range from the minimum credit requirement to some that exceed that number. This flexibility is present today in our degree programs and will continue into the future.

The 120 credit hour minimum requirement would allow departments, who so chose, to appropriately design their programs to graduate students in eight credit hours less than is currently required. When appropriate to use, this would help students potentially graduate a semester sooner it could defray significant costs for students and allow them to go on to graduate school or the world of work sooner. This is particularly important for our students with financial need. Given the impact on students and the typical nature of 120 credit hours among other universities, I hope you give this proposal serious consideration.