

# DANGERS OF 90-CREDIT DEGREES

## What Educators Need to Know

ON FEB. 10, THE MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION OPENED A DANGEROUS DOOR FOR PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, ALLOWING THEM TO PROPOSE BACHELOR'S DEGREES WITH JUST 90 CREDITS.

These watered-down degrees, if approved, threaten to unleash a wave of negative impacts on students, educators, and public colleges and universities.

## IMPACTS ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

- **Attack on liberal arts**  
Thirty fewer credits means fewer electives, less general education and reduced majors, gutting the well-rounded degree that equips students for a rich civic and professional life.
- **Rising tuition despite fewer credits**  
Cutting 30 credits does not reduce fixed costs of the institution, and may instead lead to higher tuition and fees per year.
- **A two-tiered system in the making**  
The most financially vulnerable students may disproportionately opt for the weaker degree, creating deep inequities and widening the opportunity gap in our state.
- **Job losses and workload increase**  
A reduction in credits stands to eliminate educator positions and place a significant burden on those who remain.

## RISKS TO OUR STUDENTS

- **Fourth year opportunities disappear**  
The most formative experiences — capstones, senior theses, research, double majors and minors, internships and co-ops — are at risk of being lost.
- **Employers want more, not less**  
Recruiters want college graduates who “see the big picture,” who can lead diverse teams and adapt to rapid change.  
~ 2024 UC-Davis Corporate Recruiters Survey
- **Graduate school out of reach**  
Many graduate programs will not accept students who lack the standard number of credits without additional coursework.
- **Professional licensing at risk**  
Many professions have minimum credit requirements for licensure. Ninety credits may not be enough.
- **Additional out-of-pocket costs**  
Pell Grants typically do not cover coursework after a degree is awarded. Students needing additional credits for graduate school or licensure may have to pay out of pocket or obtain loans.
- **Most at risk to be replaced by AI**  
Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei warns that “AI could eliminate up to 50% of entry-level, white-collar jobs within the next five years.” With less education, 90-credit graduates are especially vulnerable.
- **A credential that closes doors**  
Employers may discount degrees with less than 120 credits, prioritizing candidates with full, 120-credit credentials.
- **The great unknown**  
Most financially vulnerable students opting for the shorter degree won't feel the impact until it's too late, because the economic, professional and social risks of such degrees are unknown.

“The mission of the Board of Higher Education is to ensure that Massachusetts residents have the opportunity to benefit from a higher education that enriches their lives and advances their contributions to the civic life, economic development, and social progress of the Commonwealth.”

~ BHE Mission Statement

**Does the 90-credit “innovation pilot” deliver on this promise?**

## TAKE ACTION

Stay informed. Speak up. Participate in shared governance.

Massachusetts Teacher Association • Massachusetts 90-credit Action Group

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