

February 17, 2011

From: Linda Meltzer, UFS Member/Queensborough Community College

To: Barbara Blake-Campbell, Secretary, QCC Senate Steering Committee
Emily Tai, Chairperson, QCC Senate Steering Committee

Att.

Report on the 356th UFS Plenary Session of CUNY, February 15, 2011

UFS Chair Sandi Cooper called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 p.m. in Room 9204/05/06 at the CUNY Graduate School and University Center.

I. Approval of the Agenda for February 15, 2011.

The agenda was approved by voice vote.

II. Approval of the Minutes of December 14, 2010.

The minutes were approved as distributed by voice vote.

III. Reports.

A. Chair. Activities (Oral and Written)

B. Associate Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance Matthew Sapienza was scheduled to present an analysis of Gov. Cuomo's Executive Budget, but was called away. In his place, Vice Chair Terrence Martell provided some comments. The 2012 Budget for Senior colleges is about \$45 million below 2011 and for junior colleges about \$15 million below 2011. The Budget could have been worse but included mandatory costs. Spring 2011 tuition hikes were accepted in the Budget and any future increases will have to be negotiated and not likely to happen. The Budget would have been much worse without the tuition increases. Allocation to the campuses are undecided and more work needs to be done.

IV. Panel: "Faculty Governance and General Education: Challenges to an Integrated University" with Michael Barnhart, Jason Young, Robert Viscusi, and Kevin Sailor, moderated by Rosalind Carey, Chair, UFS Academic freedom Committee.

Discussion centered: **Draft Resolution on Creating an Efficient Transfer System, 1/26/11 as follows:**

Rationale

CUNY has large student transfer flows among its colleges, with students needing remediation starting at community colleges and then transferring to pursue baccalaureate degrees, and other students transferring to meet their academic interests. To enhance these students' progress, CUNY must insure that its transfer system operates smoothly and efficiently. The majority of CUNY students who transfer within the University from an associate degree program to a baccalaureate program do so without

having completed the associate degree and thus do not benefit from current transfer guarantees extended to students who hold AA or AS degrees, including, in particular, the provision that they will be considered to have completed lower-division general education requirements.

Many of the colleges have long-standing general education requirements that reflect a time when our students were less mobile and were expected to complete their degree requirements at the College they first entered. However, while recognizing that each of these general education distributions has merit, as a system we have a responsibility to our students to ensure that our general education requirements are structured in a manner that facilitates the movement of students among the Colleges without the loss of credit.

CUNY colleges should be consistent in their evaluation of transfer credits so that students can plan their academic paths. If CUNY set the number of general education credits required at its undergraduate colleges, students would know exactly what requirements they would have to meet at any CUNY college. This would reduce the number of students acquiring more credits than they need to graduate, which would save resources for them and for the larger community. Similarly, students in associate programs would benefit from faculty agreement across the senior and community colleges about appropriate lower-division courses for entry into the major.

Now be it

Resolved, that the Chancellor, in consultation with the Council of Presidents, the University Faculty Senate, and the University Student Senate, will convene a task force of faculty, students, and academic administrators and charge it with creating a common general education framework for the undergraduate colleges of the University. The framework will set credit requirements in general education across broad disciplinary areas and will consist of a maximum of 36 credits of lower-division general education courses, with baccalaureate programs able to add up to six credits of lower- or upper-division credits at their option. This framework will apply to all A.A., A.S., and baccalaureate degrees. In addition, for A.A.S. degrees, which may contain less than 36 general education credits, all liberal arts courses for those degrees will be drawn from the courses approved for the general education framework, such that A.A.S. students will receive partial certification for completion of the general education framework

a) The Task Force shall recommend the number of credits to be allocated to each broad disciplinary or interdisciplinary area such as: written and oral communication; natural sciences; math/quantitative reasoning; social science; and humanities, global perspectives, and languages other than English. The framework will adhere as closely as possible to existing general education requirements at CUNY senior colleges. Within the broad disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) areas of the framework, all undergraduate CUNY colleges will specify individual required courses as they choose, but all colleges must accept all validated courses in those areas from any other CUNY college as meeting area requirements. Students who satisfactorily complete courses in these areas, or complete all general education requirements, will be certified as having achieved partial or full completion of the general education requirements from the colleges where they took the courses. If a student transfers to another CUNY college, all certified general education course credits will be accepted without further evaluation of those credits.

b) The Task Force will also specify the criteria by which courses will qualify as having satisfied the requirements of a disciplinary area, and those criteria will be based on learning outcomes.

c) The Task Force will complete its deliberations and present its recommended framework, including the necessary learning outcomes, to the Chancellor in a report by November 1, 2011, and be it further

RESOLVED, that all liberal arts and science courses taken for credit at a CUNY college be accepted for credit at other CUNY colleges, regardless of whether a specific equivalency exists at the transfer college, to an extent consistent with the student meeting grade requirements and residency rules at the transfer college, and be it further

RESOLVED, that clear pathways be created for the largest transfer majors. The Chancellor, in consultation with the Council of Presidents, the University Faculty Senate, and the University Student Senate, will convene relevant disciplinary committees of faculty, students, and academic administrators. By March 1, 2012, each disciplinary committee will specify no fewer than three and no more than six courses in the major or cognate fields that will be accepted as entry-level major courses or as prerequisites for such courses by all colleges offering those majors.

EXPLANATION. The Board has affirmed the rights of transfer students in a number of resolutions and the current resolutions are intended not to preempt them but to strengthen the protections they offer. Most recently, a 1999 resolution guaranteed students who completed the AA or AS degree at CUNY automatic fulfillment of lower division liberal arts and science distribution requirements toward a baccalaureate degree, with the exception that students could be asked to complete an additional course toward a college's baccalaureate distribution requirements. However, nearly two-thirds of transfer students from CUNY associate programs enroll in their new colleges before completing a degree and consequently do not benefit from these policies. Additionally, increasing numbers of students from CUNY Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree programs are transferring to baccalaureate programs.

Transfer guarantees have also been undercut by inconsistencies in how CUNY colleges have evaluated transfer credits and, in particular, by the granting of only elective credit in many cases, rather than credits that apply to general education or major requirements. These practices lead to delays and uncertainties for transfer students and, ultimately, to taking excess credits. Given increasing restrictions on financial aid and the growing fiscal constraints on the University, it is essential that prospective transfer students be able to plan and pursue their academic careers efficiently.

A standard general education framework is necessary if the City University is to fulfill its mission as an integrated system. Community colleges are a vital entry point to higher education for many students, but the system only functions well if transfer is seamless. Moreover, consistent with greater integration, the University's colleges have developed increasingly specialized curricula—a positive trend that will and should continue, but one that renders a transfer system based on narrow course equivalencies impractical and inefficient. Credit should be awarded on the basis of academic learning and not on the basis of a curricular match.

Finally, the number of credits required to satisfy general education requirements varies widely across the CUNY senior colleges. The disciplines covered at the individual colleges also vary. A common general education framework with credits that fit within

60-credit associate-degree programs would enable students to complete lower-division requirements whether in community colleges or in baccalaureate colleges. Moreover, by specifying a common set of entry-level courses, including prerequisites and cognates, to be offered and accepted universally within the major transfer pathways, prospective students will be able to prepare for transfer more effectively and receive the maximum amount of credit for their course work.

Key Points of Panel Discussion:

- Moderator Carey and panelists which included Prof. Barnhart of Kingsborough and Professors Young, Sailor, and Viscusi from Senior Colleges Hunter, Lehman and Brooklyn provided their views on key issues on the new General Education proposal: 1) balancing the right of faculty to create and 2) the needs of students to move and transfer freely between campuses.
- Main concerns addressed were how prerequisites will be influenced under new proposal and how large the number of credits will be required before majors and electives. While 36 general education credits are being discussed, questions remain as to whether it includes other requirements such as foreign language, writing and such, bring up the actual requirement.
- How this proposal relates to transfer students is at issue because of the potential for excess credits which are more costly system-wide and for students. Lehman Professor shared that its college is more generous in accepting transfer credits but this may not be true CUNY-wide. There is a fairness argument as courses are not treated uniformly across CUNY.
- While a taskforce is expected to study the implications of the proposal, the question is how task force will be assembled and how it will issues will be addressed.
- A concern is being raised that the proposal may not be addressing the issue of transfer and excess credits which motivated the proposal. It may also lessen not encourage students to transfer within the CUNY system if proposal makes more complex to do so. We may lose students at an earlier stage who may be able to take as many courses they want.
- Community colleges, in particular, may be negatively impacted due to a high number of general education credits may be required to satisfy AA and AS degrees. There may be a disincentive to transfer before AA and AS. There was a question raised with respect to pathway and whether students will stay through graduation under proposal.
- Academic freedom issues need to be addressed as faculty may need to modify their curriculum. Faculty will need “buy-in” to this plan. The proposal to some feel like it’s a drive to standardization, and ultimately reduce innovation and creativity in course offerings. Proposal was suggested as a tax on Liberal arts.
- However, at Brooklyn College, Prof. Viscusi offered a more positive view of his school’s requiring at least 9 core courses in the first two years, leaving plenty of room for students to take intellectual electives. He finds the core requirement to be energizing.
- Bottom line: a controversial proposal with many dimensions and its implementation if and when passed will vary according to departments and colleges.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

