

Subject: Board of Trustee's Resolution Message

Colleagues,

In view of the cancellation of the President's meeting, I'd like to take this opportunity to give campuses an update on the resolution on general education that will come before the Board this month (copy attached).

We've had a few questions about this proposed amendment to the Board of Trustees policy that may be of general interest, so I will summarize the major points the questions addressed. If you have further questions, of course, do not hesitate to contact me.

1. The only change from current practice this amendment addresses is a greater flexibility in fulfilling the SUNY general education requirement. Faculty can design general education programs with more than one course in an area without adding total credit if they wish to do so.
2. This amendment does not require four-year (or two-year colleges either) colleges to alter their existing general education programs.
3. Four-year colleges can still have additional general education requirements over and above the SUNY mandated minimum requirements. As long as transfer students are given credit for the approved general education course they successfully completed in a particular area, they can be required to take the additional coursework in that same subject area. Of course, we need to be mindful that the number of requirements should not violate the Board mandate that students with an A.A. or A.S. degree who transfer into a parallel program should be able to graduate in an additional two years of full-time study.
4. Chief academic officers, with the recommendation of faculty, will have greater flexibility in waiving specific area general education requirements if a student has a total of 30 credits in seven areas.
5. Students who transfer to campuses that waive additional general education requirements for A.A. or A.S. degree holders will now be more likely to have met their full SUNY-wide requirement met and proceed more readily to graduation.

Both two-year and four-year faculty governance leaders, as well as many of you, have expressed an interest in a thorough discussion of general education. After ten years experience with the current program, it certainly seems appropriate and I plan, along with you and faculty governance leaders, to help initiate that discussion this spring. No doubt, such an important project will require at least another academic year for meaningful resolution. I did not want this limited proposal, developed to the stage of a draft proposal in 2008, to be delayed that long.

Over 25,000 students transfer within SUNY each year, many of whom may be positively affected, and faculty and CAO's should be given some flexibility as soon as practical. The information I have been given indicates that a decision any later than the January board meeting would make it difficult on IT and registrar staff to make revisions to the SUNY-wide general education transcript attachment to indicate number of credits completed in place of a simple check-off in time for Fall 2010.

It does remain to be seen how campuses will exercise the flexibility and how many students (particularly transfer students) will be positively affected, but it is certainly the intent that no-one is adversely affected by this specific and narrowly focused change in the SUNY-wide requirement.

I hope that this information is helpful, but please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

Regards,
David