PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO BOARD RESOLUTION 98-241: GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2008, the SUNY Board of Trustees charged the State University System Administration with constructing recommendations for comprehensive guidelines to implement long-standing Board policies regarding transfer of students within units of the University. The Board’s overriding goal was a set of guidelines that would maximize ease of transfer of credits from one SUNY institution to another while preserving the quality and integrity of academic programs and standards.

To address one major aspect of the transfer issue, the Chair of the Faculty Senate, in consultation with the SUNY Provost, established a Committee on Transfer and Articulation composed of faculty, students, and administrators from across the University, including representatives from the Provost’s Office and the Office of Community Colleges. At the request of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the committee was reformulated as the Joint Committee on Transfer and Articulation. The work produced by that Joint Committee culminated in the November 17, 2009 Board Resolution 2009-138, “Reaffirmation and Strengthening of the State University Board of Trustees Policy on Student Mobility (Transfer and Articulation).”

As the Provost recognized, maximizing ease of transfer of credits would also involve an examination of the University’s general education requirements contained in Board Resolution 98-241 which stipulated no fewer than 30 credit hours of general education coursework with at least three credit hours in each of ten academic areas. However, because of other degree requirements, not all associate degree programs could accommodate a total of 30 credit hours of general education, resulting in a lengthening of time-to-completion-of-degree for many community college graduates upon transfer to SUNY’s four-year campuses.

For examination of that aspect of transfer, the Provost formed a committee composed of representatives from the Office of the Provost (Beth Bringsjord, Kavita Pandit, Patricia Pietropaolo, and Nancy Willie-Schiff), the Office of Community Colleges (Denise Bukovan and Dennis Golladay), the Faculty Senate (Carl Wiezalis), and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges (Milton Johnson).

The committee concluded that while the requirement for “an academically rigorous and comprehensive core General Education curriculum of no fewer than 30 credit hours …” was certainly appropriate, the requirement of at least three credit hours in each of the ten academic areas could unintentionally serve as a barrier to completion of all 30 credits in the initial two years of an undergraduate education, especially for community college students in certain A.A. and A.S. degree programs.
As a result, the committee recommended an amendment to Board Resolution 98-241 that the 30 credit hours requirement in general education could be met with coursework in at least seven of the ten academic areas. In this way, the intent of an academically rigorous general education could be satisfied while giving students greater flexibility in earning the 30 credit hours in the first two years of undergraduate study, allowing them to explore an area of academic interest in greater depth, and decreasing the necessity of taking general education courses following transfer to a senior institution. Such an amendment would have the great advantage for many transfer students of shortening the length of time for completion of a baccalaureate degree.

Although the recommendation of this committee was derived in the same time frame as those of the Joint Committee on Transfer and Articulation, key members of the Board felt that it should not be officially considered until the recommendations of the latter committee could be fashioned into a resolution which resolved the other issues surrounding transfer and which could be adopted by the Board. The resulting adoption of Board Resolution 2009-138 now affords an opportunity for the Board to review the recommendation for the amendment to the policy on general education as the second major step in a comprehensive solution to issues affecting student mobility.