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September 7, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Diana Guerin
Chair, Academic Senate, California State University

FROM: Ephraim P. Smith *EPS*
Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer

Subject: Trustees Education Policy Committee—Agenda Item Three

At the September meeting the California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees will take up the issue of our upper-division general education (GE) requirement, which is virtually unique in higher education. In view of the current pressures to maintain quality, facilitate graduation, improve efficiency, and comply with legislative mandates, the presidents again have raised the issue, advocating elimination of the 9 semester/12 quarter units of upper-division GE. Although the idea has circulated for many years, discussion surrounding the shape and direction of a possible agenda item on upper-division GE continued until the last minute. We wanted to share the final item with you as soon as that was possible.

Education Policy agenda item three will be presented as an information item, and the board will not vote on it until the November meeting. We are asking the Academic Senate CSU Executive Committee to consider putting this on the September plenary agenda, General Education Advisory Committee agenda, and Academic Affairs Committee agenda, so that we can discuss what is expected to bring the following benefits to students:

- Many degree programs currently over 120 semester units or 180 quarter units will reduce to 120/180 units;
- there will be fewer high-unit degree programs in the CSU;
- access will increase as upper-division GE enrollments are shifted to allow additional lower-division courses for new freshman and community college transfers;
- access will be expanded as more CSU degree programs will be able to participate in the SB 1440/Associate Degree for Transfer program;
- fewer students will be subject to Third-Tier tuition fees; and
- students will have less need for financial aid and will carry less debt at the completion of their degrees.

CSU Campuses
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Breadth of learning remains intact, with 39-40 (semester) units of lower-division GE requirements maintained (1/3 of degree requirements) and at least 27/36 units (nearly a year of study) remaining in the three areas of (1) math and science, (2) arts and humanities, and (3) social sciences—the only areas that have been required at the upper division. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges and Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) do not require upper-division GE courses. EO 1065 on CSU General Education-Breadth already requires that campus GE outcomes be organized according to the AAC&U Liberal Education and America's Promise framework, which also does not require upper-division courses. Therefore, we consider that this proposal offers the faculty and administration a concrete, yet quickly effective strategy for giving students a better chance of completing their degrees with an appropriately broad and diversified curriculum, of graduating with four-year degrees, of paying more affordable tuition fees, and of entering the workforce with sufficient baccalaureate-level knowledge and skills having been developed throughout their GE and major courses.

Please contact me or Chris Mallon (562) 951-4672 if you would like to discuss opportunities for consultation on this opportunity to improve access, increase course availability, improve graduation rates and make degrees more affordable to students in programs across the system.

c: Dr. Ron Vogel
Dr. Christine Mallon
Mr. Leo Van Cleve
Mr. Ken O'Donnell

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Upper-Division General Education and Degree Completion

Presentation By

Ephraim P. Smith
Executive Vice Chancellor
and Chief Academic Officer

Christine Mallon
Assistant Vice Chancellor
Academic Programs and Faculty Development

Summary

In July 2000, the trustees adopted Title 5 section 40508, which reduced the minimum number of units required to complete new bachelor's degrees to 120 semester units and 180 quarter units. Campuses are required to review degree programs regularly and to report annually to the board, justifying baccalaureate programs that remain above 120/180 units. By 2008, campuses reported that 80 percent of degree programs required no more than 120/180 units. In the years since then, we have seen only a very small improvement, with 81 percent of programs not exceeding the minimum this year. Majors requiring more than the minimum number of units reportedly cannot reduce further because of professional accreditation requirements, pressure from advisory boards and input from employers. As there has been insignificant reduction over the past four years, it is time to look beyond the major for possible strategies to increase the number of programs that can be completed within four years of full-time study (30 semester units/45 quarter units annually).

Reducing the total number of units required at graduation could be accomplished in a number of ways: by reducing the number of units required in the major (our previous focus) or in the American Institutions requirement, campus-specific requirements, or systemwide general education (GE) requirements. This item proposes that a reduction take place where the change would least affect the breadth of the undergraduate curriculum or the unique educational experiences characteristic of each major and each university. With these considerations in mind, it is recommended that California State University (CSU) bachelor's degrees no longer require upper-division GE courses and that the current lower-division minima be joined by a systemwide limit on lower-division GE requirements. Title 5 regulations require nine upper-division GE units: three in the social sciences area, three in humanities area, and three or four units in the math and science area. These three disciplinary areas are well represented in the lower-division curriculum, where students are required to take a total of 27/36 units or more.

The CSU upper-division package is out of step with degree requirements at other universities. The University of California has no such systemwide requirement; neither does the State University of New York, Colorado State University, nor most other universities. Similarly, upper-division GE is not required at Harvard University or Stanford University; and these courses are not required by our regional accreditor, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The most recent WASC *Handbook of Accreditation* was revised in February 2012 and maintains the expectation that breadth will be infused across the curriculum: “Baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and a fulfilling life.” That breadth can be provided beyond GE courses—appearing in major courses, campus-specific requirements or electives.

Currently, 508 CSU degree offerings require more than 120 semester units (180 quarter units). By removing the required nine upper-division GE units, 288 of these CSU degree offerings would be reduced immediately to only 120/180 units. That represents 288 more degree programs that could be completed within four years of full-time study and that could qualify for SB 1440, the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act (SB 1440: Associate Degree for Transfer). Students in these 508 degree programs would have to pay for nine fewer semester units or 12 fewer quarter units, would be less likely to be assessed the proposed Third-Tier Tuition Fees (if that policy were adopted), and would reduce their total units at graduation. Eliminating the upper-division GE requirement could also lower student debt levels and reduce student reliance on financial aid. Shortening the time to degree is especially valuable for students entering the CSU with required remediation work ahead of them, as those students are already obligated to take more courses than are their college-ready counterparts.

Eliminating upper-division GE creates student access, even during the budget crisis. Without the 9/12 units of upper-division GE, the CSU could provide access for new students who have been waiting to enter the university as freshmen or community college transfers. Degree-completion SB 1440 pathways will increase in number. Changing the Title 5 upper-division GE requirement would remove a barrier for many CSU bachelor’s programs that are within the 120/180 standards but that could not fit both their major requirements and the 9/12 GE units into a community college SB 1440 Transfer Model Curriculum. In addition, the proposed Title 5 change would benefit those students who encounter scheduling gridlock. For example, when students have freedom to choose more electives, they more easily can find courses to fulfill the total units required for graduation. Even during this time of restricted course offerings, the reduced requirements and greater choice would provide more scheduling options for students trying to finish their degrees.

Title 5 section 40405.4 allows the chancellor to grant exceptions to CSU general education-breadth requirements for high-unit professional degree major programs on a program-by-program basis. With 508 program offerings requiring more than the minimum number of units, it

would be a time-consuming and resource-draining process to review each program for the purpose of reducing GE courses in high-unit majors. The cost of the process would diminish the savings already described, and it would leave open the question of the value added for students whose programs would still include the upper-division 9/12 units.

Breadth would not suffer from eliminating upper-division GE, as the three discipline areas of math or science, humanities, and social science will still require at least 9/12 units each (three courses each, plus a possible laboratory course for science), exposing students to an appropriate amount of breadth in their undergraduate programs. The courses required in those areas could be completed at the lower or upper division, according to student choice. Additionally, typically six “American Institutions” units come from the social sciences, meaning that students will likely complete at least 15/22.5 units in the social sciences. It would be difficult to argue that students would suffer academically from having only three courses each, at minimum, instead of four courses in each of these GE areas.

Reducing required upper-division GE courses benefits prospective and current students, as well as the state and the university. Faculty resources now dedicated to teaching upper-division GE would be made available to teach much-needed courses in the major or to teach other courses that will be needed by the thousands of additional students who will be entering the university as existing students graduate sooner. Total units to degree will decrease for students in those 508 degree programs that currently exceed the Title 5 bachelor’s degree minimum; fewer students will be forced into the proposed Third-Tier Tuition Fee category if it were adopted; and more CSU degrees will be available via the SB 1440: Associate Degree for Transfer Act. Adopting this proposed change to Title 5 would reduce by 57 percent the number of programs over 120/180 units. The elimination would increase the proportion of programs at 120/180 units by 13 percent, taking the CSU from 2,208 to 2,496 bachelor’s programs that require no more than 120/180 units for graduation. It would mean that 92 percent of CSU bachelor’s degrees could be completed within the minimum units, breaking the years-long stalled progress in reducing high-unit degree programs.

The proposed change would be effective fall 2013, and any currently enrolled students who adopt the graduation requirements (“catalog rights”) for fall 2013 would be subject to the exclusively lower-division GE requirements with the new unit-count limits. An agenda item will be presented at the November meeting for board action to adopt the following recommended changes to Title 5.

Title 5. Education
Division 5. Board of Trustees of the California State Universities
Chapter 1. California State University
Subchapter 2. Educational Program
Article 5. General Requirements for Graduation
§ 40405.1. California State University General Education - Breadth Requirements.

(a) Each recipient of the bachelor's degree completing the California State University General Education-Breadth Requirements pursuant to this subdivision (a) shall have completed a program which includes a minimum of ~~48~~ 39 semester units or ~~72~~ 60 quarter units and a maximum of 40 semester units or 62 quarter units. ~~of which 9 semester units or 12 quarter units shall be upper division level and shall be taken no sooner than the term in which the candidate achieves upper division status. At least 9 of the 48 semester units or 12 of the 72 quarter units shall be earned at the campus granting the degree. The 48 semester units or 72 quarter~~ Any additional campus lower-division general education requirement or any campus upper-division general education requirement must be approved by the chancellor. Units shall be distributed as follows:

- (1) A minimum of 9 semester units or 12 quarter units in communication in the English language, to include both oral communication and written communication, and in critical thinking, to include consideration of common fallacies in reasoning.
- (2) A minimum of ~~12~~ 9 semester units or ~~18~~ 12 quarter units to include inquiry into the physical universe and its life forms, with some immediate participation in laboratory activity, and into mathematical concepts and quantitative reasoning and their applications.
- (3) A minimum of ~~12~~ 9 semester units or ~~18~~ 12 quarter units among the arts, literature, philosophy and foreign languages.
- (4) A minimum of ~~12~~ 9 semester units or ~~18~~ 12 quarter units dealing with human social, political, and economic institutions and behavior and their historical background.
- (5) A minimum of 3 semester units or 4 quarter units in study designed to equip human beings for lifelong understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological, social, and psychological entities.

The specification of numbers of units implies the right of discretion on each campus to adjust reasonably the proportions among the categories in order that the conjunction of campus courses, credit unit configurations, and these requirements will not unduly exceed any of the prescribed semester or quarter unit minima or maxima. However, the total number of units in General Education-Breadth accepted for the bachelor's degree under the provisions of this subdivision (a)

~~should~~ shall not be less than ~~48~~ 40 semester units or ~~72~~ 62 quarter units and shall not be more than 40 semester units or 62 quarter units.

(b) The president or an officially authorized representative of a college ~~that~~ which is accredited in a manner stated in Section 40601 (d) (1) may certify the extent to which the requirements of subdivision (a) of this section have been met up to a maximum of ~~39~~ 40 semester units (or ~~58~~ 62 quarter units). Such certification shall be in terms of explicit objectives and procedures issued by the Chancellor.

(c) In the case of a baccalaureate degree being pursued by a post-baccalaureate student, the requirements of this section shall be satisfied if:

(1) The student has previously earned a baccalaureate or higher degree from an institution accredited by a regional accrediting association; or

(2) The student has completed equivalent academic preparation, as determined by the appropriate campus authority.

Note: Authority cited: Section 89030, Education Code. Reference: Sections 66055.8 and 89030, Education Code.

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Article 5. General Requirements for Graduation

§ 40405.3. ~~Lower-Division~~ General Education Reciprocity Between the California State University and the University of California.

(a) The Chancellor may enter into a formal agreement of reciprocity for ~~lower-division~~ general education requirements between the California State University and the University of California. Pursuant to such an agreement, students transferring to the California State University from campuses of the University of California may satisfy California State University general education-breadth requirements for the bachelor's degree through satisfactory completion of all ~~lower-division~~ general education requirements of a University of California campus. ~~and of a minimum of 9 semester~~

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~~units or 12 quarter units of upper division general education coursework at the California State University campus granting the degree. Upper division general education requirements shall be taken no sooner than the term in which the candidate achieves upper division status.~~

(b) If the Chancellor or an officially authorized representative of a University of California campus certifies that a student has completed that campus's ~~lower division~~ general education program, California State University campuses shall accept that certification as meeting all ~~of the lower division~~ general requirements for the baccalaureate degree.

Note: Authority cited: Section 89030, Education Code. Reference: Section 89030, Education Code. Authority cited: Section 89030, Education Code. Reference: Section 89030, Education Code.