

## Contents

- 1 | IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDENT SUCCESS TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS
- 3 | 30 YEARS OF EVOLUTION FOR ASSOCIATE DEGREE
- 6 | CALIFINLANDIA
- 9 | NONCREDIT PROGRESS INDICATOR PILOT
- 12 | CB AND SP CODES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AND WHY
- 14 | THE CHANCE TO BE HUMAN
- 16 | MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES ARE HERE!
- 18 | THE ERWC: AN ADDITIONAL APPROACH TO INCREASING COLLEGE READINESS
- 20 | NONCREDIT AND CREDIT BASIC SKILLS - A PROVOCATIVE BALANCE
- 22 | ACCREDITATION: WHAT'S NEXT
- 23 | JULIE'S INBOX



# SENATE ROSTRUM

ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES NEWSLETTER

### THE ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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# Implementation of the Student Success Task Force Recommendations

MICHELLE L. PILATI, PRESIDENT

**A**fter a year-long process, the Student Success Task Force (SSTF; formed in response to Senate Bill 1143, Liu, 2010) completed its work in December. Shortly thereafter, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors accepted the recommendations and then adopted a legislative agenda based on them. While some of the recommendations require neither legislation nor regulation for implementation, others would require changes in statute, and new bills must be introduced no later than February 24, 2011.

While we can debate the impact of the recommendations if they are implemented, argue for more holistic and nuanced definitions of student success, and bristle at the effective modification of our mission, we also need to consider our own agenda for student success and how can we move that agenda forward. Prior to this effort, faculty were already actively pursuing new avenues or modifications of existing routes to ensure success for our widely varied student population.

Every college has made efforts with respect to improving basic skills, a focus of the SSTF. The Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) was born from the need to raise standards while not leaving anyone behind. BSI dollars resulted in local changes intended to ensure that students would still be able to meet their goals when new graduation requirements for English and math were implemented; these were changes deemed necessary by the faculty in order to make our degrees more meaningful. At the time these changes were made, everyone was cognizant of the potential to impact degree completion. But the need for a degree to have meaning, quality, and appropriate rigor trumped a focus on counting degrees. Community colleges are not certificate or degree producing machines; they are institutions of higher education that must maintain standards. The Academic Senate is the body

that guards these standards and advocates for changes that improve the circumstances of our students in meaningful ways. Our role with respect to academic and professional matters requires that we advocate for the highest quality in what we do in order to ensure the best possible experience and education for our students.

A long-standing challenge in any California community college classroom is the diverse preparation of our students. Open access to the colleges has long meant open access to courses for which a student may or may not be prepared. This practice, of course, negatively impacts student success. California has historically required statistical validation in order to implement many prerequisites. In other words, we must create an environment in which students do not succeed in order to justify restrictions that ensure students are prepared for a course prior to registration. As a consequence, students who are prepared may not be able to secure a seat in a course that they need, and the students who are in the class may not have the skills necessary to succeed. Furthermore, the overall quality of instruction and the overall course-taking experience may be diminished for all students as the instructor strives to teach to the course outline of record and provide additional assistance to students who lack the requisite skills.

Less than a year ago, a Title 5 change was made to permit a simpler approach to the establishment of prerequisites. Unfortunately, individual colleges, the Academic Senate, and the Chancellor's Office were then occupied with the SSTF and its work, as well as responding to other legislation that mandated curricular changes at the local level (i.e., SB 1440). As a consequence, necessary guidance was not provided for using a new means of justifying prerequisites, and the attention and efforts of colleges became consumed by other efforts.

Community colleges are poised to see an increase in outcomes even in advance of new prerequisites and the implementation of any element of the SSTF recommendations. The current challenge to students of gaining admission to needed classes and recent changes in the rules regarding withdrawal and repetition for a substandard grade are likely to lead to changes in outcomes as the stakes of every course enrollment are increased. As these factors combine with access issues at the UC and CSU that will likely direct more truly college-ready students to our colleges, savvier students are more likely to get into the classes that they desire in an environment where the demand for classes far exceeds the supply.

What should colleges be doing now to implement the SSTF recommendations? The more progress that can be made absent changes in regulations or law, the less justification there will be for such changes – and the more ready we will be when they happen. Currently, there is no mandate that students begin their basic skills instruction early. This is a tragedy. Students should develop the skills they need to succeed in transfer-level courses before they take those courses; college-level coursework should require college-level skills. Faculty need to begin the process of identifying and implementing prerequisites. This process requires a robust dialog among faculty in the discipline to ensure that there is consistent rigor across sections and dialog between disciplines that ensures that the right prerequisite is selected. Faculty also need to be prepared for the shift in course offerings that these changes will require.

Establishing more prerequisites will necessarily push the use of college resources in the direction that they need to move. Students will have to seek assessment and enroll in basic skills courses sooner. All faculty will have a vested interest in ensuring that students are proceeding through basic skills sequences in a timely manner. Colleges should consider implementing prerequisites and employing approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness. One way to phase-in prerequisites is to begin by making selected preparatory courses prerequisites or corequisites. This practice would permit an identified preparatory course to serve as

one-half of a learning community for the target course, offering students a means of entry into the course they desire, a seat in a course to simultaneously develop the skills needed to succeed, and the benefit of being a part of a learning community. This approach is just one example that could be used to impose a structure on student schedules that might facilitate student success.

We do not need the SSTF recommendations to force us to refocus, realign, or make whatever other adjustments have been proposed by its 22 recommendations. But the recommendations do provide us with an incentive to be more proactive with our success efforts and to ensure the most effective use of college resources. ■

## UPCOMING EVENTS

For more information please be sure to visit our website at [www.asccc.org](http://www.asccc.org)

### **Vocational Education Leadership Institute**

March 21-23, 2012  
San Francisco Airport Westin

### **Spring Plenary Session**

April 19-21, 2012  
San Francisco Airport Westin

### **Faculty Leadership Institute**

June 14-16, 2012  
Temecula Creek Inn

### **SLO Institute**

July 12, 2012  
Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport

### **Curriculum Institute**

July 12-14, 2012  
Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport

# 30 Years of Evolution for Associate Degree

BETH SMITH, VICE PRESIDENT

**I**nterest in the associate degree has never been greater due to the claim that the State of California will need 1,000,000 more citizens with a college degree by 2025<sup>1</sup>. Given the attention on the associate degree, some faculty have asked to study the component parts of it: general education (GE), the major or area of emphasis, and electives. Over time, the Academic Senate and the Chancellor's Office have entertained proposals and recommendations to modify GE, the major requirements, or other aspects of the degree. The associate degree has evolved in several important ways over the last 30 years, and this evolution contributes to its value today. The degree has been shaped by philosophies, standards, debate, and the need to prepare both educated citizens and employees for the state. This article will review a brief history of key changes to the associate degree in the last 30 years that influence current conversations about the component parts of the degree.

The Academic Senate office has archived documents from the 1970s and 1980s that have been useful in providing history and context behind the current associate degree requirements. These documents detail Senate resolutions, note recommendations from committees and task forces, and include old sections of Title 5. The requirements for the degree may have changed or developed prior to this time, but the Senate does not have older records available for study. One of the oldest records, for example, comes from 1979 and indicates that the Senate passed resolutions recommending that no more than 10% of the total units in a degree should be "remedial" units in basic skills and that those units should not be used to satisfy GE requirements, that the number of GE units should be equal to one-third of the total units required for the

associate degree, and that criteria should be formulated for the inclusion of courses within the GE pattern. As most of today's California community college educators know, no basic skills courses may now be counted toward the associate degree, the number of GE units in a degree rarely equates to one-third of the degree, and some colleges are still developing criteria to be used for the inclusion of a course in the GE package.

Recommendations that were overly prescriptive (such as requiring the number of GE units be equal to one-third of the units in the degree) rarely resulted in permanent changes. The best and most lasting recommendations were those where colleges were given boundaries and guidelines yet retained flexibility to serve their students in the best way possible. During the 1980s, many recommendations were developed by the Senate that were both limiting as well as flexible. Recommendations from resolutions of that decade include the following:

- ◆ Urge designation of the major field on diplomas for all associate degrees.
- ◆ Define the Associate of Technology Degree, which includes a major of 40 or more units.
- ◆ Remediate basic skills deficiencies before students enroll in transfer courses or degree programs.
- ◆ Recommend that the associate degree applicable mathematics courses include Elementary Algebra and all levels above, and, after Fall 1986, raise the requirement to Intermediate Algebra.
- ◆ Confer with the chief instructional officers about creating an associate degree for transfer and an applied associate degree.
- ◆ Recommend establishing two degrees:

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<sup>1</sup> 2008 PPIC report, "Closing the Gap: Meeting California's Need for College Graduates". [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_409HJR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_409HJR.pdf)

- ◆ Associate Degree 1: 35 major units and 21 GE
- ◆ Associate Degree 2: 21 major units and 35 GE
- ◆ Establish that only the associate in arts and associate in science be offered in California community colleges.
- ◆ Propose that an associate in arts contain 39 units of GE modeled on CSU and UC requirements and 15 units in a concentrated area.
- ◆ Propose that an associate in science contain 24 units of GE and at least 30 units in the major field.
- ◆ Oppose creation of the Applied Science Degree.

Given all of these recommendations from the 1980s, it is interesting to see which ones gained traction and were implemented and which ones did not. For example, the fourth bullet describes a change to the graduation requirement for mathematics that was eventually enacted in Fall 2009, and the seventh bullet defines only two types of associate degrees: the associate in arts and the associate in science, which are the two degrees we have had since that time. In addition, Title 5 regulations from 1983 indicate that a minimum of 18 units in both the major and GE were required for the associate degree. Despite interest in different types of associate degrees and various unit configurations for GE and the major, associate degrees—in arts and in science—continue to be based on a minimum of 18 units in each GE and the major.

Also during the 1980s, a system task force on academic quality was formed. Among the many topics considered by this group were the associate degree and standards for the degree. One of the key accomplishments of the task force was to enact a Title 5 change that defined degree applicable and non-degree applicable courses in order to protect the value and integrity of the associate degree. These standards still exist in Title 5 §§55002. The task force went further to recommend that certificate programs be defined so that “students have the option to add on GE requirements if they desire an associate degree.” Certificates were typically 18 units or more so the model associate degree could be the sum of its component parts: work in the major (certificate) plus GE plus any remaining units as electives.

Further, the task force recommended that the community college system work with the CSU to establish the associate in arts degree as sufficient academic preparation for transfer with standing at the junior level, including the recognition of special degrees for this purpose, and develop common core GE. About this same time, the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) was already shaping the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) as the common core GE alluded to by the task force. As a point of comparison, many states around the nation today are interested in developing common GE patterns for community college transfer students. California has been leading the nation in this area for over 20 years.

In 1999, the Chancellor’s Office prepared a proposal regarding the associate degree. The proposal included the following recommendations:

- ◆ Conduct a survey to see if degrees based on GE transfer requirements are useful.
- ◆ Possibly label this degree as an “Associate in Arts degree in University Studies”
- ◆ Consider granting the degree with only 56 units as required for transfer (note: 56 units were all that were required at that time)
- ◆ No local graduation requirements
- ◆ Consider two degrees: one with 18 units in the major and 30 units of GE and the other with 30 units in the major and 18 units of GE.

No one seems to remember if such a survey was developed and administered, and the title of the proposed degree is similar to the title of GE compilation degrees developed in the early 2000s. There are significant similarities to the Chancellor’s Office proposal and the current requirements of the associate degrees for transfer resulting from SB 1440 (Padilla, 2010).

The Academic Senate established other positions on the associate degree in the 2000s, chief of which was the opposition in 2006 to GE compilation degrees, particularly those based solely on CSU GE breadth courses or IGETC. And in 2008, the Senate approved definitions of the associate in arts and in science.



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The faculty defined an associate in science to be any degree awarded in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM disciplines) or any career technical education (CTE) area. The associate in arts degree would be awarded in every other discipline. Although the community college system supported these faculty recommended definitions of an AA and an AS, Title 5 does not include these definitions because of challenges from the Department of Finance.

The minimum standards of 18 units in the major (30% of the degree) and 18 units in GE (also 30% of the degree) give local colleges flexibility to provide a variety of degrees that meet the needs of students in many different majors and pathways. If a college designed a degree adhering to the minimums for both areas, which few if any colleges have done, then students would be left with 24 units of electives (40% of the degree), which seems excessive. Most colleges have degrees with more units in GE or the major because of local philosophies and programmatic design. If a student completes the associate in arts for transfer (AA-T) or associate in science for transfer (AS-T) with 39 units of GE and 18 units in the major, then 65% of the units in the degree come from GE and 30% come from the major, and only 5% of the units are electives unless there is double counting. Colleagues who have attempted over the years to modify the standards for the degree in terms of the minimum or maximum number of units in GE or the major have found that their arguments were often outmatched by those advocating local control of the number of required units, as long as the minimums were met.

Given 30 years of proposed changes to the associate degree and the number of recommendations that have shaped the current degree, it is difficult to know what changes might loom in the future. Students earning an associate degree must understand its value, the reasons for its component parts, and its place within the range of all academic degrees available in order to appreciate the design of the degree established by faculty and local academic senates. Today's degree has evolved to a point where the quality of the courses and rigor for students surpasses that of previous degrees, and faculty will continue to review the degree in order to uphold the quality and integrity of any degree earned by students within the state. ■

# CaliFinlandia

PHIL SMITH, AT-LARGE REPRESENTATIVE

In the current budgetary and economic climate, the California Community College System is being pushed to change more than ever before. Proposals from a diverse set of constituencies and interest groups are so frequent and numerous that faculty are hard-pressed to respond to these proposed reforms, much less develop a proactive vision of where we want to go. Yet without such a vision for the future, disparate forces could easily pull us apart. Although it is possible to fashion a proactive, strategic direction de novo, a little research about what has worked in other places can often provide inspiration. I would like to humbly suggest that we look toward Finland.

Recently, an article titled “What Americans Keep Ignoring About Finland’s School Success” has been making the rounds in education circles. The article examines the spectacular performance of the Finnish school system and the causes of its success. Finland, a small country that had a somewhat mediocre educational system until the early 1970s, has over the last quarter century transformed itself into something of an educational superpower. Finnish students now score at the top or near the top in international comparisons of achievement in literacy, mathematics, and science. Even more interesting, Finland managed this strong showing by following a model quite different from K-12 educational “superpowers” like Singapore, South Korea, and China and starkly different from high-stakes testing, somewhat punitive accountability model of the United States for K-12 schools.

The Finns achieved such student success by pretty much ignoring almost every major educational fad favored by Western democracies. One example of such Western viewpoints is the recurrent idea of applying business models, even manufacturing models, to schools in order to make them more productive and

efficient. This trend reached its nadir in the United States in the form of the No Child Left Behind Act, with its annual assessment testing and accountability reporting. The Finns essentially eschew all such high stakes testing, the only exception being a National Matriculation Examination taken at the end of their equivalent to high school. The idea of two weeks of achievement testing for all students annually is pretty much unthinkable in Finland. Instead of standardized tests, Finnish teachers measure progress and plan educational interventions the old-fashioned way, using self-created tests and report cards. Such practices might seem quaint to Americans, but they reflect an educational philosophy that acknowledges students as they are rather than focusing on where testing norms say they should be. It is a philosophy that trusts those closest to students, classroom teachers, to know which assessment and interventions promote effective learning.

Interestingly, some close parallels already exist between the Finnish school system and the California Community College System. Like the Finns, but unlike our K-12 counterparts, California community colleges have been able to stave off external pressures for standardized testing. Like primary and secondary teachers in Finland, community college faculty take students as they come to us, design appropriate educational experiences for them, and evaluate student progress as a part of our professional responsibility. Just as Finnish educators have job protections through their unions, California community college faculty working conditions are also protected by collective bargaining contracts. And like the Finnish educational system, California community colleges have set high minimal standards for new colleagues who plan to teach at our colleges.



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Given that the California Community College System shares so many commonalities with the Finnish system already, perhaps we can use the philosophical underpinnings of Finland's national school system to help us form and clarify our vision of the California community college. The Finnish educational system seems to rest on three major policy directions: developing and maintaining trust between citizens—including parents—and teachers, ensuring equal opportunity for all students without regard to geography or walk of life, and acknowledging that students come to school with a range of talents, abilities, and needs. These three areas might be a useful starting point for developing a proactive vision for California community colleges.

#### TRUST

Finns place a great deal of trust in their teachers and the educational profession. But trust did not happen immediately; trust between educators and citizens was earned over time. The literature suggests that increasing trust developed as the profession of teaching became more selective. Finland made and makes a

conscious effort to look for, recruit, and educate those with the highest teaching aptitude and talent. Only 1 in 10 applicants is accepted into Finland's university teacher education programs. Over time, professional selectivity promoted greater trust. After all, why go to the trouble of hiring the best and most talented and then micromanage their work? This is true in America as well. Professions such as law and medicine set extremely high standards, and they are accorded high status.

While it is true that some faculty positions at our colleges are highly competitive with hundreds of applicants for a single position, is that the norm across the entire California Community College System? Are there steps that we as community college faculty can take to hire the most talented? What would those processes and institutions look like?

#### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Prior to 1970, educational opportunities for students in Finland depended on where they lived. Rural areas were underserved. One of the primary goals of Finland's compulsory system of education was to give all students an equal opportunity to learn; whether someone gets an education or not should not depend on what section of the country the person is born in. Similarly, the Finns consciously adopted a system that provides equal opportunities for students regardless of walk of life, economic situation, and immigrant or non-immigrant status. Americans attending presentations about Finland's system are often surprised to hear that Finland has no private schools, but the rationale is clear given their commitment to equal opportunity. Indeed, educational reformers in Finland were much more interested in promoting educational equity than they were educational excellence. An intriguing hypothesis emerges from their efforts. Perhaps excellence is an effect of educational equity rather than something that can be achieved independently.

California community colleges have long been positioned as the higher education safety net for the state. As open-access institutions, we have not refused and do not refuse anyone; however, have we provided equal opportunity to educational services and programs to all Californians? Are some regions of the state being underserved? Are California's different

populations getting the educational services that they need from our colleges? What would a California community college equal opportunity look like?

### INDIVIDUALITY

In Finland, educators focus on student learning at the level of the individual; they resist using standardized norms to make pronouncements about what students know. An excessive focus on where students should be, in Finnish educators' eyes, would prevent teachers from focusing on what students do know and obfuscate the next step in their development. In contrast, with the emphasis on testing that exists in the United States, our principals, teachers, and students commonly feel considerable anxiety to exceed the norm for the test, and the consequences of not doing well as a group are high for all involved. Interestingly, in international comparisons of math students, Finnish students report the least anxiety about the subject, perhaps because their teachers view their incoming knowledge as a starting point, not a deficit.

Historically, California community colleges have, in fact, acknowledged that students come to us with different knowledge sets and abilities. For example, across the system, we have extensive basic skills programs, both credit and noncredit. Placement tests are used to sort students into the right classes. But can California community colleges do more to track and support individual progress? Finnish schools incorporate a significant amount of guidance to facilitate students' educational decisions, and faculty as professionals take a team approach when an intervention is needed. What are some ways that California community colleges could monitor student progress? What types of advice and guidance are needed to promote individual intellectual development and when do they make the most sense to be offered?

The underlying philosophy that guided the California Educational Master Plan and AB 1725 in creating the current California Community College System seems remarkably similar to that which now guides the Finnish system. Today, as California community colleges find themselves asked by external stakeholders to explain, justify, and defend the choices they make with respect to the education of students, the time is opportune for faculty to consider a successful, well-

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documented educational model from another country. This article's bibliography includes several pertinent articles related to the Finnish educational success story. Such research regarding the Finnish model might help the Academic Senate and other faculty groups fashion a vision for California community colleges that promotes greater trust of the teaching provision, provides equal opportunities to all students, and acknowledges that each individual has his her unique set of talents and needs.

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# Noncredit Progress Indicator Pilot

JANET FULKS, NONCREDIT TASK FORCE CHAIR

The Noncredit Task Force—composed of 42 people from all disciplines and roles in noncredit across the state, including 17 different institutions—was developed in Spring 2010 to address specific noncredit resolutions about accountability reporting and to oversee a pilot project which is revolutionary to many areas of noncredit: the use of progress indicators for students' work. Some areas of noncredit have always graded or indicated progress, while other areas have evaluated student work and carefully advised students' next steps based on the students' abilities. No matter what the strategy, all grades submitted to the Chancellor's Office from noncredit areas have been converted to UG (ungraded) and reported out in statewide reports in this manner. Therefore, the success and progress in noncredit has not been reported at a statewide level, often lending an opportunity for people to incorrectly judge the work of noncredit without valuable data representing noncredit success.

The Noncredit Task Force has been working on the following strategies in an effort to craft a means of reporting the great work done in noncredit:

- ◆ Defining progress indicators/grades.
- ◆ Educating faculty and others about the purpose of indicators or grades.
- ◆ Developing a pilot project to document, report, and analyze progress indicators from participating colleges.
- ◆ In conjunction with the Academic Senate's Noncredit Committee, developing and conducting training for faculty about using indicators and addressing reporting gaps.
- ◆ Sharing and developing methods, based on the pilot college experiences, to help other

institutions review and plan their own processes for reporting.

- ◆ Collecting feedback from faculty on the effects of pilot indicators.

## BACKGROUND

Noncredit serves over 300,000 FTES in our system and represents about half of the total basic skills and ESL work in the California community colleges. Noncredit students are significantly more diverse and commonly have the greatest socioeconomic needs. Many noncredit students are less likely to succeed in higher education without the benefits noncredit provides, such as flexible schedules, increased contact hours, opportunities for self-paced learning, and no fees. Helping students through noncredit fulfills an essential role for our state: providing adults with basic life, literacy, and employment skills. This function has become even more important with the reduction of many Adult Education programs in K-12 districts in spite of California's growing needs in these areas. Because accountability has become so important and funding is often dependent on documenting student success, noncredit education faces a huge challenge. With no grades in most of the courses and no documented progress or success beyond career development or college preparatory certificates, high school diplomas, and a few other measures, the good work of noncredit becomes invisible and the funding is easily eliminated. Noncredit has always been funded at a rate far below that of credit instruction, and although noncredit "enhanced" funding became available through SB 361(2006, Scott), this funding is far below the credit funding rate and tied to documented metrics and annual accountability reporting.



The Task Force is addressing several Academic Senate resolutions related to noncredit which state major concerns of faculty, staff, and administrators. Among these resolutions are 9.01 F09 (Appropriate Noncredit Accountability Measures), 13.01 S08 (Noncredit Accountability Measures), and 13.04 S10 (Improving Noncredit Accountability Reporting through Progress Indicators). This most recent resolution reads as follows:

*Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges develop a task force of primarily noncredit faculty and administrators representing all noncredit areas and other representatives, as appropriate, to research options and develop progress indicators and implementation strategies and to prioritize and address accountability issues as soon as possible, continuing into the 2010-2011 academic year;*

*Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges develop a voluntary pilot using interim noncredit indicators with a goal of beginning in Summer 2010 and continuing into 2010-2011 academic year, with results to be used as research information for the taskforce and others; and*

*Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges pursue necessary changes in Title 5 and Board of Governors' policies with a goal of implementation of official noncredit progress indicators beginning in Fall 2011.*

#### UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Eight colleges submitted noncredit progress indicator data in Fall 2010, about 11 colleges participated in the Spring 2011 reporting process, and more will participate in the final reporting period of Fall 2011. The data were rich in providing many lessons beyond what we expected and will inform future efforts to track progress in noncredit courses. The Task Force provided training for a variety of colleges and posted training materials on the Academic Senate BSI3 website. But gaps in actual reporting at each level were discovered – classroom to administration, administration to MIS data reporting at the local campus, and reporting from the local campus to the Chancellor's Office. Local researchers were sometimes confused because their practice has been to change any noncredit grades reported to "UG" or ungraded, and some researchers automatically did this even though the pilot had been approved at the college. In

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many cases the researcher or administration refused to accept progress indicator reports because they do not include noncredit data in their credit MIS reports; rather, the college uses alternative methods (shadow systems) to collect noncredit positive attendance only. Colleges that use these positive attendance reports offered little cooperation to include progress indicators. While most credit grades are reported electronically, noncredit faculty, over 80% of whom are adjuncts, often do not have computer access. Several colleges submitted progress indicators via scantrons and tallied the results by hand.

On the positive side of the data and gap analysis, we were amazed at the overall results and the outstanding professional development faculty did to norm the meaning of NP (no pass), P (pass), and SP (satisfactory progress). We have surveyed over 108 faculty that participated in the progress indicator/grading pilot and have seen overwhelmingly positive feedback. Some of that feedback included the following:

Overall 83.8% of the faculty felt the use of progress indicators was practical. Many responded that documenting the progress was beneficial to them, to their students, and to evaluation of the curricular work they were doing. Some described the benefit of the tangible record of learning and more clearly indicating promotion for those ready to register at the next level. Perhaps more importantly, faculty reported the benefit of having documented areas where students could target improvement. Some felt it motivated students to focus their work. Faculty also indicated that it adjusted focus more clearly to each individual student's needs. On a larger scale, faculty felt that it was important to document and report how students are moving through the noncredit system. Current reporting is very inadequate and under-reports the good work of noncredit due to technical problems regarding the way cohorts are selected and the method by which progress is determined without any indicators.

The recording of progress indicators in noncredit has yielded numerous positive results at various colleges. Using the data collected, Santa Ana College has been able to identify the number of average hours necessary for a student to get SP or P. Imagine how useful it is to tell positive attendance students that at their specific level of ESL, 108 hours usually translates into a P. In another instance, North Orange CCD – School of Continuing Education implemented the progress indicator data into their newly developed program review process. This practice allowed the institution to make a variety of important decisions and perform program budgeting based upon data.

Another analysis actually showed that success is very cost efficient in noncredit. The unsuccessful students usually attend few hours, and because noncredit allocation is based upon positive attendance, unsuccessful attempts are very cheap –unlike credit allocations of an entire semester for both successful and unsuccessful students.

Noncredit is currently experiencing an exciting time. The Task Force will be collecting final data for the Fall 2011 term. At a time when budget crises loom, the collection of data through progress indicators will allow us to report the good work done in noncredit education where the paradigm addresses student success regardless of the time required. ■

# CB and SP Codes: What You Need to Know and Why

CRAIG RUTAN, SANTIAGO CANYON COLLEGE, CURRICULUM COMMITTEE  
MELYNIE SCHIEL, COPPER MOUNTAIN COLLEGE, CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

**S**ystem-wide success measures and benchmarking are increasingly a part of our local dialog. When faculty review the Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges (ARCC) report or the Chancellor's Office DataMart results, they often feel that the reports do not accurately reflect the activity of our programs. For this reason, faculty should know how the work we do locally is translated into system-wide information.

The Data Element Dictionary defines the language your MIS department uses to communicate with the Chancellor's Office. Each college must follow the same protocol to report our programs and activities. In most colleges, the questions we answer during the curriculum process relate to the data elements; however, the level of specificity and the degree to which faculty are relied upon to provide specific information for reporting may vary across our schools. Are you aware of how your program activity is coded and submitted to the System Office? Do you know who you can ask in your MIS/IT department to find out what labels are on your course and program data?

There are 20 unique sets of data, each labeled by a two letter designator reported to the Chancellor's Office on a regular basis. Within each data set are fields labeled by a two number designator. The datasets prepared by your MIS/IT department transmit information about everything the college does, ranging from employee assignments (EJ) to financial aid data (SF and FA), from Perkins (SV) numbers to matriculation statistics (SM). Of particular importance to faculty are the course basic (CB) and student program (SP) data elements.

The CB file communicates key course data to the Chancellor's Office. Some data elements duplicate

catalog information, while others may not show up in any published documents. Whether published or not, faculty should always review this information. Among the elements that you might need to review are the following:

- ◆ CB03 is where the TOP code is housed. If you have ever looked up the California community college Taxonomy of Programs (TOP), you know that which code is used is often a matter of local interpretation. Faculty should review the TOP codes and ensure that courses and programs are placed in the appropriate category.
- ◆ CB04 and CB05 delineate whether a course is for credit and whether it transfers to a CSU or UC. Curriculum committees determine CSU transferability and should also ensure that such determination is appropriately reflected in the data elements; however, UC transferability is determined by UC campuses working with our articulation officers. Curriculum chairs should know how the local MIS/IT department is notified when articulation is confirmed. If the proper department is not notified, there may be errors with this code. If all of the courses in your program transfer to both systems, the data should reflect that information.
- ◆ CB08 indicates whether a course is basic skills or not. If you designate a course as both basic skills and degree applicable, you will generate a MIS error.
- ◆ CB09 is especially important for vocational programs because it describes the level of vocational applicability for a given course, which is important input in Perkins Core Indicator calculations.

# Help Wanted!

Only dedicated, hard working, creative faculty need apply.

The Academic Senate fills many appointments to committees, ad hoc groups and task forces within the Senate itself, the Chancellor's Office and other state agencies. A pool of faculty from a variety of disciplines, geographical areas, governance experiences, ethnicities, full- and part-time, instruction and student services areas is needed on an on-going basis. Appointments are made throughout the year.

Check out the Senate's webpage with information about statewide service at [asccc.org/get-involved](http://asccc.org/get-involved) and please submit the Application for Statewide Service.

- ◆ CB21 is perhaps the best publicized code because of the large scale effort to properly code our basic skills courses. In order to see statewide student movement through basic skills, discipline faculty were asked to map local courses to a common template in order to show levels of progression. The CB21 code indicates how many levels below transfer your course is. By looking at these codes for a sequence of courses, we are able to track student progress towards transfer level coursework.
- ◆ CB24 designates whether your course is program applicable or stand-alone. A program applicable course must be required in the major (or area of emphasis) or be a restricted elective. Any credit course that does not fall into one of these categories is stand-alone.

The SP file, transmitting student program completion data, is much simpler than the CB file:

- ◆ SP01 indicates the subject area, by TOP code, of the student degree or certificate.
- ◆ SP02 delineates whether the award is credit or non-credit as well as the type of degree or certificate earned.
- ◆ SP03 tells when a student completed the program
- ◆ SP04 maps the completion back to the unique five digit code the Chancellor's Office assigned when the program was originally submitted.

If faculty are concerned that the Chancellor's Office Data Mart does not reflect actual student completion in a program, they should check to ensure that no errors exist in these data elements. Does your curriculum committee review these data elements when new or existing programs are discussed? Just like the CB03, it is essential that the faculty take the lead in determining the TOP code assigned to a program.

Many other codes are also used for reporting to the Chancellor's Office, but the list above gives a good start to understanding the way the data system is organized. Why do we need to worry about all of these codes? Curriculum is the purview and responsibility of the faculty and proper coding is part of that responsibility. If we are not willing to ensure that information is reported properly to the Chancellor's Office, then the information according to which colleges are increasingly being measured will be inaccurate. Such inaccuracies can at the least create confusion and additional work and ultimately could impact the structure and even the funding of our academic programs. ■

# The Chance to be Human

LESLEY KAWAGUCHI, EDUCATIONAL POLICIES COMMITTEE CHAIR

I began my career as a community college instructor with a sense of social justice – I wanted to work in the most diverse educational environment to help students regardless of background to succeed and to become the future leaders of their communities, their cities, their state, and this nation. The promise of the original Master Plan was a very radical vision, assuring that every student desiring higher education would have access to it. At its core, this vision rested on the concepts of equity and access: No matter what a student's background was, each student had the opportunity to further his or her educational journey.

During the past twenty years, community college instructors have witnessed the rising tide of students arriving at our colleges without the requisite basic skills necessary to do college-level work. Moreover, budgets, politics, and the increased desire to “fix” the community college system have slowly chipped away at the initial Master Plan promise. In the wake of the SB 1143 (Liu, 2010) Student Success Task Force Recommendations and calls to “ration education,” I want to bring two cautionary examples of who would be locked out of the system if some of these recommendations move forward.

I learned of this first educational journey in May 2011. “Rich” began his higher education journey 16 years earlier when he graduated from high school and went to Skyline College because it was near his home. He drifted up to American River College, and because he thought he was ready to transfer to UC Santa Barbara, he had to take one class at the City College of San Francisco, where, in his words, “I lasted about a minute.” He had an education plan, but it did not work out for him.

Rich eventually moved to Santa Cruz, where he took classes at Cabrillo College and where local agreements

also allowed him to take classes at UC Santa Cruz. He eventually got a job working at a restaurant started by friends. His future dream was to teach math to middle or high school students. However, he ended up learning how to be a cook, even becoming a sous chef at several restaurants and having a cooking career at some of San Francisco’s finest restaurants—all without having to go to culinary school and accruing a huge debt.

However, about a year ago, Rich decided to go back to college – Cal State East Bay, where he graduated with a bachelor’s in math in June, 2011. He is now in their credentialing program and student teaching at an East Bay high school, where he is also coaching a basketball team. Despite having an education plan, two parents who are retired teachers, and a sister who is a full-time instructor at a California community college, Rich needed the opportunity to find and make his own way.

The second educational journey began back in the 1960s when I was in high school. One of my best friends was female then. “Kelly” was instrumental in forming a folk singing group that I joined. We were partners on the debate team. We then went to and graduated from UC Berkeley.

Over the years, Kelly underwent several transformations: working for an internet company and then losing her job, acquiring a brain injury, coming out as a lesbian, and then identifying as transgendered. In this journey, “Kelly” became “Kelvin” and began to take classes at the local community college—clearly something he couldn’t do if unit restrictions were imposed. He started a club for gay, lesbian, and transgendered students, formed another club for students with acquired brain injury, and ultimately became a student officer. He was also one of a small group of students who formed what would become the Student Senate for California Community Colleges.

Kelvin died unexpectedly in October, 2011. His death prompted a major outpouring of grief on Facebook, an obituary in the local newspaper, and a memorial service at his community college.

In the wake of the Student Success Task Force recommendations, I cannot help thinking what our society would have lost if these two individuals had not been given access to the community college system. Yes, their presence may have “locked out” other students in these days of budget cuts and reduced course offerings. And yes, it is best for students to know what their goals are. However, a couple of recent articles on the school system in Finland are a reminder that the premise and promise of the original Master Plan for access and equity must continue to be a part of the community college mission. Sergey Ivanov in *The Atlantic* observed that, “Decades ago, when the Finnish school system was badly in need of reform, the goal of the program that Finland instituted, resulting in so much success today, was never excellence. It was equity. Since the 1980s, the main driver of Finnish education policy has been the idea that every child should have exactly the same opportunity to learn, regardless of family background, income, or geographic location. Education has been seen first and foremost not as a way to produce star performers, but as an instrument to even out social inequality.” Ivanov concluded that, “The problem facing education in America isn’t the ethnic diversity of the population but the economic inequality of society, and this is precisely the problem that Finnish education reform addressed. More equity at home might just be what America needs to be more competitive abroad.” <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/12/what-americans-keep-ignoring-about-finlands-school-success/250564/>.

Diane Ravitch made similar observations about the Finnish system: “We claim to be preparing students for global competitiveness, and we reward mastery of basic skills. Our guiding principles: Competition, accountability, and choice. Finland has this singular goal: to develop the humanity of each child. Isn’t that a shocking goal? Their guiding principles: equity, creativity, and prosperity.” [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/ravitch-why-finlands-schools-are-great-by-doing-what-we-dont/2011/10/12/gIQAmTyLgL\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/ravitch-why-finlands-schools-are-great-by-doing-what-we-dont/2011/10/12/gIQAmTyLgL_blog.html).

Moreover, budgets, politics, and the increased desire to “fix” the community college system have slowly chipped away at the initial Master Plan promise.

A recent editorial in *The Los Angeles Times* commented on the Student Success Task Force recommendations: “The recommendations also put too much emphasis on students taking only the courses within their defined plans, and on the colleges offering only those courses. A computer student who wants to take a literature course to deepen her education should be encouraged to do so, as long as she doesn’t go beyond her allotted 100 credits. A philosophy student should feel welcome to delve into a biology course. Colleges don’t just churn out degrees and certificates; they’re supposed to encourage students to think big and try new things. The community colleges can more efficiently educate California students through the 100-point rule and by giving top priority to students who need the education most, without reaching the point of becoming mechanistic.” <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/opinionla/la-ed-community-20120108,0,3398797.story>

The conclusions of Ivanov, Ravitch, and *The Los Angeles Times* remind me of a button Kelly used to wear when we were at Berkeley. The button said, “I am a human being – do not fold, spindle, or mutilate.” But these conclusions are also a reminder that the core values of the Master Plan are still worth fighting for: access, equity, and ultimately humanity— in short, social justice. ■

# Mental Health Resources Are Here!

STEPHANIE DUMONT, AREA D REPRESENTATIVE

**D**windling student services funding and a deeply ingrained stigma against people suffering from psychological disorders have contributed to colleges' lack of preparedness in serving students with mental health needs. And although the recently adopted Student Success Task Force Recommendations emphasize the critical need for strengthened support services, a legislative commitment for funding of these services remains elusive. As a result, the number of grant applications is on the rise as many of us are seeking funding alternatives just to help existing programs stay afloat. However, there is good news: this year colleges will have the opportunity to apply for grant monies to strengthen mental health services on their campuses, and all 112 colleges will benefit from a statewide grant project targeting students with mental health needs.

The passage of Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act, (MHSA), in November 2004 provided an opportunity to transform the public mental health system in California by addressing a broad continuum of prevention, early intervention, treatment, and infrastructure support to Californians suffering from mental illness. In addition to the funding available to county mental health departments, MHSA provides resources to other state entities to enhance their capacity to support the overarching goals of MHSA and its various components. The California Community College Chancellor's Office is one of six state agencies that received funding to support implementation of the MHSA. The MHSA components are community services and support, prevention and early intervention (PEI), workforce education and training, innovation, and capital facilities and technological needs.

## CALMHSA

While counties at the local level best provide direct services, the Oversight and Accountability Commission ultimately determined that some strategic MHSA

initiatives would be best implemented in a coordinated fashion statewide. To most effectively and efficiently implement these programs—particularly the three prevention and early intervention initiatives—six California counties formed the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), a joint powers authority that now includes more than 40 counties representing nearly 90% of the California population.

In 2011, CalMHSA approved funding to support statewide student mental health efforts. Three Student Mental Health Initiative grants were awarded to CSU, UC, and California Community Colleges, with K-12 receiving two grants. California Community Colleges received \$6.9 million and created a joint venture between the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the Foundation for California Community Colleges (FCCC) called The California Community Colleges Student Mental Health Program (CCSMHP).

## CCSMHP OVERVIEW

Funding for the CCSMHP is from the prevention and early intervention (PEI) component of MHSA, and thus programs and strategies developed with grant monies need to reflect PEI guidelines. These guidelines are as follows:

- ◆ Community collaboration
- ◆ Cultural competence
- ◆ Client/family-driven mental health system for children, transition age youth, adults, older adults
- ◆ Family-driven system of care for children and youth
- ◆ Wellness focus, including recovery and resilience
- ◆ Integrated mental health system service experiences and interaction

The community college SMHP has four major components: training and technical assistance, online suicide prevention gatekeeper training, campus-based grants, and evaluation. Outcomes for the CCSMHP include supporting all 112 campuses in implementation and sustainability of PEI strategies that allow campuses to address the mental health needs of the overall student population in general and student veterans in particular and to promote sustainable collaborative infrastructures between campuses and local mental health service systems.

#### TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TTA)

Objectives for TTA are to provide direct expert mental health (PEI) consultation, including offering 18 regional trainings, spread out over three academic years, as well as campus specific trainings (in person and on-line) primarily for campus faculty, staff, and students. The TTA module also allows for collaboration with UC and CSU partners. The Chancellor's Office intends to release the Request for Proposals no later than the first quarter of 2012. Any public, private, or non-profit corporation able to fulfill the requirements of the contract will be eligible.

#### ONLINE SUICIDE PREVENTION GATEKEEPER TRAINING FOR FACULTY & STAFF (SPOT)

SPOT focuses on implementing a capacity building plan for system-wide suicide prevention training. The plan will include outreach strategies, steps to incentivize participation in training, methods for embedding online gatekeeper training, and evaluation of rate of use by colleges. A successful contractor will provide both system-wide and individual college technical support, administer a system-wide online training program available to all colleges, and consult with individual colleges to develop a sustainability plan for development and implementation of online suicide prevention training. As is the case for training and technical assistance, the Chancellor's Office intends to release the Request for Proposals no later than the first quarter of 2012, and any public, private, or non-profit corporation able to fulfill the requirements of the contract will be eligible.

#### CAMPUS-BASED GRANTS

Twelve \$255,000 Campus Grants will be available for individual colleges through a Request for Application

The community college SMHP has four major components: training and technical assistance, online suicide prevention gatekeeper training, campus-based grants, and evaluation.

process. Proposals must include how the college intends to address prevention and early intervention (PEI) infrastructure development, demonstrate the ability to leverage existing college mental health and/or student health resources to bolster PEI initiatives, and propose a budget that does not supplant existing resources. Successful grantees will also provide evidence of established community partnerships with County Mental Health, community mental health organizations, CSU, UC, etc.

Grant applications will be reviewed with a focus on both geographic and population equity and must address three strategic areas: faculty and staff training, peer-to-peer resources, and suicide prevention programming. Funding proposals must specifically identify how the college intends to approach these areas.

#### STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM EVALUATION

Details on the evaluation component of the grant are yet to be made public, although comprehensive data collection and an outcomes-based evaluation process are expected.

For more information about mental health services in the California Community Colleges see <http://www.cccco.edu/ChancellorsOffice/Divisions/StudentServicesandSpecialPrograms/MentalHealthServices/tabid/1600/Default.aspx>. ■

# The ERWC: An Additional Approach to Increasing College Readiness

JON DRINNON, AREA B REPRESENTATIVE

MICAH JENDIAN, ECCTYC LIAISON TO THE CSU ERWC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**A**t the 2011 Fall Plenary Session, the delegates passed resolution 13.10, which resolved that the “Academic Senate for California Community Colleges disseminate information about the California State University’s Expository Reading and Writing Course by Spring 2012 to local academic senates and encourage them to involve their English faculty (including their reading faculty) in collaboration with local high schools and CSU campuses in this college readiness effort.” The Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC) was designed to improve the readiness of high school students for English competency in college, whether in the CSU, UC, or the California Community College (CCC) systems, and employs a research based effective practices approach for teaching both reading and writing. The purposes of this article are to provide essential information about the ERWC, to note the potential advantages it can offer to the CCC system, and to illuminate opportunities for involvement.

Focused efforts to increase students’ college readiness are certainly not new to the CCC. Most notably, the Basic Skills Initiative has initiated important conversations and facilitated the development and implementation of a variety of successful innovations on campuses throughout the system. Faculty at Los Medanos College and Chabot College reorganized their English programs – integrating an applied pedagogy similar to the ERWC – and have demonstrated significant student improvement as a result<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, the Student Success Task Force recommendations encourage the CCC to “collaborate with K-12 education to jointly develop new common standards for college and career readiness that are aligned with high school exit standards.” This collaboration has

already begun through the Early Assessment Program (EAP), and the ERWC is another avenue toward the same established CCC college readiness goals.

## THE CCC-CSU EARLY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (EAP)

The EAP is a voluntary program designed to increase the college readiness, and eventual college success, of California’s high school students by bridging the gap between high school standards and college expectations. It has three major components: early testing, the opportunity for additional preparation in grade 12, and professional development activities for high school teachers. Initiated in 2004 by the California State University System and already comprised of many collaborators (the California State Department of Education, the California State Board of Education, and County Offices of Education statewide), the California Community Colleges officially partnered with the EAP through the passage of Senate Bill 946 in September of 2008. This bill authorized participating CCC districts to use California Standards Test (CST) and Augmented CST (EAP) results for the purposes of assessment and placement of high school students and encouraged the utilization of the existing infrastructure of the CSU’s EAP. As of December 2011, 57 CCC campuses have voluntarily agreed to accept “college ready” designations earned on the English portion of EAP – administered at the end of the 11th grade – for placement directly into first semester transfer level composition. For more information about the program and content of the Augmented CST (EAP), visit <http://www.collegeeap.org/> and <http://www.calstate.edu/eap/augmentation.shtml>.

The ERWC was established for those students who do not earn a “college ready” designation through the Augmented CST/EAP so that their senior year can be fully utilized to increase academic preparation.

<sup>1</sup> For more on the Los Medanos reorganization see “Los Medanos College: A Basic Skills Success Story,” *Rostrum* — August 31, 2010

## WHAT IS THE ERWC?

Originally created by a task force of university and high school educators as a part of the CSU's Early Assessment Program in 2004, the ERWC was designed to improve the academic literacy of high school seniors in preparation for college. The course was piloted for several years, revised in response, and published in 2008. Approved by the University of California and the CSU as a year-long college-preparatory English course in 2006, students in schools that choose to offer the ERWC may take the course as their core English class in twelfth grade. Based mainly on non-fiction texts, the course emphasizes the in-depth study of expository, analytical, and argumentative reading and writing. The curriculum contains 14 modules divided into two semesters. Each module is structured by a central assignment template composed of a sequence of integrated reading and writing experiences that begin with prereading activities, move into reading and postreading activities, and continue through informal and formal writing assignments. Text-based grammar lessons supplement the first semester of the course. Unique in its rhetorical approach to grammar, the Text-Based Grammar for Expository Reading and Writing (Ching, 2008) uses curriculum readings and students' own writings to build competence in writing conventions and rhetorical power in language use. Meeting both high school requirements and college expectations, the course is intended to align with California English-Language Arts Content Standards, the recently adopted Common Core State Standards, and the Statements of Competencies created by the Intersegmental Council of Academic Senates articulated in Academic Literacy: A Statement of Competencies Expected of Students Entering California's Public Colleges and Universities.

After attending an ERWC Professional Learning Series, facilitated through the CSU's Center for the Advancement of Reading and local County Offices of Education, high school faculty can offer the entire course in grades 11 or 12 or opt for a "punctuated" adoption which integrates select modules into grades 11 and/or 12.

## EVIDENCE OF ERWC'S PROMISE

To date, over 6,000 California educators have participated in professional development for the ERWC, and 278 schools (22.3% of the state's 1,246

comprehensive high schools) have adopted the ERWC as a full-year course. Data linking the use of the ERWC with increased college readiness has been derived from evaluation studies that examined quantitative and qualitative outcomes for schools with large numbers of teachers participating in ERWC professional development and schools that participated in a federal Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant from 2006-2010. In those studies, the rates of gain were calculated on the percentage of college ready students (as measured by the Augmented CST/EAP test in 11th grade) and the percent of students proficient upon entry in the CSU (as measured by the CSU English Placement Test) from 2006-2010. In the FIPSE evaluation, the schools participating in ERWC showed more improvement than all schools at the state level. Further evaluation of ERWC's efficacy is built into a recently acquired Investing in Innovation (i3) grant, "From Rhetoric to College Readiness: The Expository Reading and Writing Course."

## CCC FACULTY PARTICIPATION

CCC faculty continue to be engaged in these efforts. Both authors of this article serve on the ERWC Advisory Committee, representing the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges and the English Council of California's Two-Year Colleges. A handful of CCC faculty have become co-facilitators for the ERWC Professional Learning Series, and many CCC faculty have attended local ERWC Professional Learning Series to become acquainted with the course, to inform their own participation in local college readiness efforts, and to enhance their own instructional practices. In some regions, CSU and CCC faculty are encouraging their feeder high schools to adopt the ERWC and are working collaboratively with high school teachers to more deeply imbed the ERWC emphasis and methodology in grades 9-12.

These ERWC related efforts could be further expanded and hold tremendous promise to increase the academic preparedness of our future students, increase the academic preparedness of our own community college students, and thus increase student success across the board. We encourage and invite you to get involved.

To learn more about the ERWC and/or to register to attend ERWC Professional Learning Series, visit <http://www.calstate.edu/eap/englishcourse>. ■

# Noncredit and Credit Basic Skills – A Provocative Balance

WHEELER NORTH, BASIC SKILLS COMMITTEE CHAIR

**R**esolution 9.06 S10 seeks to inform faculty about “local course offering priorities for both credit and noncredit and... recommendations regarding classification of noncredit courses and programs that are meeting community needs.” Resolution 9.02 F11 calls to explore “the appropriate division of credit and noncredit basic skills classes” while also supporting “funding noncredit career development and college preparation classes at apportionment rates commensurate” with credit funding.

While the foci of these two resolutions are distinctly different, they both demonstrate that faculty need to be better informed about and advocate for a more effective balance in our course offerings and how those courses are funded. This very complex conversation is exacerbated by the repetition conversation and the conversations about access and equity.

If we started with a brand new slate and created a higher education model that would best meet our students’ needs, what would that model look like? Before beginning this discussion, we have to set aside two remarkably entrenched ideals. The first is the notion of funding student education at differing rates in community colleges, which promotes curricular decisions based on fiscal parameters. The second is our resistance to change because our livelihoods are very directly connected to the existing structures.

In a world of universal success, the educational pipeline gets smaller as one moves higher simply because students reach their end goals at varying points. Not everyone wants to earn a PhD, but a very large number of adults want to benefit from some professional training or earn a certificate or lower level degree. As learners progress upwards, they also become

more sophisticated as learners and thus need different kinds of support. Additionally, the need to repeat courses declines—although there are some common hurdles like organic chemistry and calculus—because the students become increasingly more effective as learners. When students have become highly skilled learners, the likelihood of their success in credit courses and beyond goes up significantly.

The sequence of learning matters greatly, but in some ways it becomes less critical as one becomes more educated. This detail is particularly true in basic skills and lower division areas, where sequence and actual progress must be carefully monitored and matched. Furthermore, when an educational system must remain within finite fiscal boundaries, having underprepared students enter into courses negatively impacts not only their success but also the system by unnecessarily reducing our capacity to provide access, or at least to provide access that will reasonably lead to success.

Back to our clean slate; what if noncredit and credit FTES were funded at commensurate rates? We might consider reframing the context by using the terms “precredit” and “credit.” While many noncredit students do not see themselves as credit bound, ultimately the skills most noncredit students are gaining do increase their capacity to be successful at credit levels. The primary curricular relationship between noncredit and credit is that the former develops skills needed to think critically and the latter further develops existing critical thinking capacity. Thus the term “precredit” more accurately describes the pathway students are taking, or may eventually take, and avoids the “lower value” stigma associated with the term “noncredit.”

The present moment presents an important opportunity because we really do not have to change dramatically

to achieve this model. We are already severely limiting the number of times students can repeat credit courses. Some of the noncredit funding has been raised to be closer to the credit levels. We are working to collect performance and progress information in both credit and noncredit areas, and we are using that information to better ourselves. Changes in the process for establishing prerequisites have increased our ability to implement course entry requirements that can ensure productive student learning as students move upwards into more complex subjects. Finally, we now have a formal set of system recommendations which in some ways capture elements of these ideas and may have the political potential to help us reach that perfect place if we are thoughtful about it.

The precredit to credit balance in the perfect community college should depend greatly on the community being served. However, given that only 51 districts offer noncredit, precredit skills-development needs clearly are not being met through noncredit offerings, most likely because of the differential funding rates. This issue becomes even clearer when we also consider the ratio of noncredit to credit offerings where noncredit is offered. We certainly cannot blame colleges for participating in this inequity of course offerings. From the financial standpoint, why do something for \$10 dollars when you can do the same thing and earn \$14?

However, from a curricular viewpoint one might question why we would grant credit to students for coursework that we specifically design to be at the pre-college credit level. We should therefore remove the negative fiscal incentive for this practice; if the resources to pay for all instructional levels were the same, if faculty were paid the same, and if district overhead and support services were funded comparably, the conversation would be very different. We would then be more free to have conversations about where open, unfettered access is most likely to generate the greatest amount of success and equity in that success.

The fact that we have different minimum qualifications for noncredit and credit faculty who all teach the same thing is telling. This issue also stems from the differential-funding culture that places more value on education as one moves higher. Yet the external forces who so frequently call for more success are unwilling

The fact that we have different minimum qualifications for noncredit and credit faculty who all teach the same thing is telling.

to embrace the simple fact that the foundations for success are integrally tied to equity and access. We must prepare all seekers of education to be effective learners first because further education becomes irrelevant without those skills.

We cannot easily determine what success means for each of our students, and the definition evolves for each of them as they progress. But many students stop progressing after failing repeatedly because they are not successful as learners. Since equity is the opportunity for all students to succeed without undue disparity towards any group, the key component for ensuring equity is to make certain each student becomes a successful learner. If equitable success for all really is important to us, we must prioritize so that it occurs at the learning skills level. The fact that it currently does not is likely our primary inefficiency as a system given the number of students who stop progressing because they failed at some higher level.

The point of introducing these ideas is really aimed at the notion that when the California economy begins to improve, funding will increase. We should therefore prepare now by considering how we would prefer to reinstate that funding. Insanity has been characterized as doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results. Is insanity the best we can do? Providing access and ensuring equity in the development of learning skills for every adult should be our highest priority, and we should begin the conversation now to determine the best ways to achieve this goal. ■

# Accreditation: What's Next

MICHELLE GRIMES-HILLMAN, ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE CHAIR

Just as the dust begins to settle and faculty leaders think their colleges might just meet the 2012 deadline the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has set for student learning outcomes, program review, and planning, the ground threatens to move again. In the Summer 2011 issue of ACCJC News\*, the ACCJC announced that it had begun the decennial review and possible updating of accreditation standards. It further indicated that it had invited Peter Ewell (Vice President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, or NCHEMS) to meet with the commission in June 2011 to share his views on current trends in federal expectations regarding accreditation and accountability.

The ACCJC has indicated that it will be more forthcoming about the process for revisions to the standards in the next few months. This year's Academic Senate Accreditation Committee considered proposing a Fall 2011 resolution calling for significant faculty involvement in the process, only to realize that the Senate has been on record as supporting that position for a decade (see Resolution 2.02 F01). The 2011-12 Accreditation Committee hopes to be vigilant in keeping faculty concerns regarding accreditation before the ACCJC.

The ACCJC's many observations regarding the struggle of all regional accreditors to stay abreast of federal demands have seemed increasingly prescient in light of the attention focused on for-profit colleges in Washington over the past year. In its search for increased accountability, the federal Department of Education has promulgated new requirements for all institutions of higher education, whether for-profit or public. These requirements include such issues as distance education, calculation of the credit hour, and "gainful employment." Faculty members who are also members of The Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC) have an additional

resource for keeping themselves current in the form of FACCC's "The Weekly," which regularly includes updates on issues being addressed in both Sacramento and Washington.

The ACCJC has offered some good news in the past year: the commission reported in its summer newsletter that sanctions related to program review, planning, and internal governance have declined, in some areas by over 50%. However, sanctions related to fiscal woes and board governance have increased.

The Academic Senate has struggled with the ACCJC's position that it is accountable only to its member colleges and not to the Academic Senate as a body representing all California community college faculty at the state level. Recently, however, the commission has shown signs that it is seeking to better communicate the challenges to accreditors in mediating between increasingly insistent federal demands for improved outcomes and the struggle of perpetually underfunded and sometimes leadership-challenged colleges to meet those standards. The ACCJC participated in the annual CIO Conference last year and will be partnering with the Academic Senate in presenting this year's Accreditation Institute, February 10-11 in Anaheim.

So what is next on the Accreditation horizon? Demands for colleges to do more with fewer resources will likely continue. Community colleges will continue to be bycatch in nets intended to trap abuse by for-profit colleges. Nevertheless, faculty as professional educators are in the best position to turn half-hearted compliance into meaningful academic policy and practice that truly benefits the students we serve. We hope to see some of you in Anaheim in February at the Accreditation Institute and we look forward to continuing to support the leadership faculty provide for our colleges.

See [http://www.accjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Summer-2011-Newsletter\\_8-1-11.pdf](http://www.accjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Summer-2011-Newsletter_8-1-11.pdf) ■

# Julie's Inbox

The Academic Senate receives many requests from the field, and most of them come through the Senate Office into the inbox of our own Executive Director Julie Adams (hence the name of this column). As you might imagine these requests vary by topic, and the responses represent yet another resource to local senates. This column will share the questions and solutions offered by the President and the Executive Committee. Please send your thoughts or questions to [julie@asccc.org](mailto:julie@asccc.org).

*Dear Julie,*

*Our Foreign Language Department wants to offer its two highest levels of Spanish concurrently because the two classes do not get enough enrollment to survive individually, but the dean is saying that offering the classes together would be a violation of Title 5. What are the regulations or limits regarding the offering of concurrent classes (two or more classes taught in the same place at the same time by the same instructor, such as multiple levels of a class sequence being combined)?*

*RLCC*

Dear RLCC,

This question has arisen frequently since colleges have begun to think about how to adapt their curriculum in light of upcoming changes to repeatable courses. Various disciplines may wish to create levels of courses or different courses out of those courses that were formerly repeatable, but in order to meet enrollment minimums some of those new levels or courses may need to be offered concurrently.

Title 5 and Education Code do not specifically offer any guidance regarding concurrent courses. The most important factor to consider in offering classes in this manner is that all statewide and local curricular standards must be met for all of the courses included. For example, the total enrollment for the combined courses should not exceed the enrollment maximum

set for any of the courses when they are offered separately. The objectives outlined in the Course Outline of Record for each class must also be met to avoid any lowering of instructional quality. Likewise, the instructor must meet minimum qualifications for all of the courses being offered together. Although the courses are being taught in the same place and by one person, the standards and expectations set by the college and instructor qualifications determined by the state for each individual class must still be respected.

In addition to these requirements, colleges should consider carefully the logic of combining the instruction of the specific courses. In some cases, joining multiple levels of a course sequence may make perfect sense, and indeed those students enrolled in lower levels might benefit from exposure to more experienced students. In other cases, however, the education of the more advanced students might be inhibited if too much time is occupied with students working at significantly lower levels. Likewise, if the courses being offered concurrently are too diverse in their content, the workload of the instructor may be unfairly increased and the quality of the instruction therefore could be compromised. Thus, while offering courses concurrently may be a logical and even beneficial option in some cases, it could in other instances be detrimental to the experience of the students, and faculty should therefore weigh these factors carefully before deciding to combine instruction in this manner.

Good luck,

Executive Committee ■