Draft Resolution on
Creating an Efficient Transfer System
1-6-2011

Rationale
CUNY has large student transfer flows among its colleges, with students needing remediation starting at community colleges and then transferring to pursue baccalaureate degrees, and other students transferring to meet their academic interests. To enhance these students’ progress, CUNY must insure that its transfer system operates smoothly and efficiently. The majority of CUNY students who transfer within the University from an associate degree program to a baccalaureate program do so without having completed the associate degree and thus do not benefit from current transfer guarantees extended to students who hold AA or AS degrees, including, in particular, the provision that they will be considered to have completed lower-division general education requirements.

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

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

Now be it

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, the number of credits required to satisfy general education requirements varies widely across the CUNY senior colleges. The disciplines covered at the individual colleges also vary. A common general education framework with credits that fit within 60-credit associate-degree programs would enable students to complete lower-division requirements whether in community colleges or in baccalaureate colleges. Moreover, by specifying a common set of entry-level courses, including prerequisites and cognates, to be offered and accepted universally within the major transfer pathways, prospective students will be able to prepare for transfer more effectively and receive the maximum amount of credit for their course work.