To    Academic and Student Affairs Committee, Board of Regents  
From    Faculty Advisory Committee  
RE     Proposed Transfer and Articulation Policy  
Date    March 9, 2012  

The Proposed Transfer and Articulation Policy aims to address a complicated and systemic problem in Connecticut’s public higher education system. In transferring across institutions and especially from the community colleges to the state universities, too many students lose credits, confront unnecessary duplications of their efforts, and waste time completing courses that do not contribute toward the completion of degree requirements. This problem results in student frustration, unnecessary tuition costs for students and the state, and likely lowers retention and graduation rates. A desire for both justice and efficiency obliges all of us to create clear and visible pathways to four-year degrees, to provide students with excellent career and academic advising, to maintain high quality instruction that advances student learning and persistence, and to seek ways to avoid or at least minimize the complications in curricula design that contribute to the systemic problems. While graduation rates can always be improved by simply lowering academic standards, the challenge is to reform the system to increase the quantity of graduating students while improving the quality of higher education in Connecticut.

After the February meeting of the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC), the committee members and alternates distributed the policy across the 17 campuses to solicit opinions, advice, comments, and questions from faculty, administrators, and other members of the campus community. Hundreds of e-mails were gathered and then distributed among the members. In addition, notes from public forums, senate meetings, and other events and conversations across our campuses yielded additional insights and concerns. Brief summaries of these issues and questions are included as addenda to this memo. Some of the particularly insightful and carefully composed contributions are also included as addenda.

Based on the feedback we received, the FAC composed a set of 10 recommendations for changes to the policy. Each recommendation was separately discussed and voted on. All of the recommendations passed with unanimous support.

Recommendations:

1. Reduce the number of common credits to the General Education core to 30 from 36.  
   Rationale: Changing the number from 36 to 30 will allow each state university and community college to retain aspects that are unique to each institutional mission. Four-year major programs that encumber many GenEd credits will have more flexibility in selecting courses to meet critical learning goals with a smaller, mandated GenEd core. Students electing to attend one of the state universities would still be able to complete more than 30 GenEd credits at a Community College.

2. Align the specification of core competencies from the policy both with NEASC Accreditation Standard 4.14-4.19 and Connecticut’s Regulations for Licensure and Accreditation of Institutions and Programs of Higher Learning Section 10a-34-15  
   Rationale: Since the core competencies will be the driving mechanism for the common educational experience for tens of thousands of students and become institutionalized across 17 institutions, great care must be taken in how these are defined, measured and articulated across identified courses. Many faculty from across the system have identified problems and made thoughtful suggestions as to how these need to be defined (See, in particular, the letter written by Margaret Martin included in the addenda).
3. Change the statement “…guaranteed admission and junior status at the receiving university” to read “…guaranteed admission and junior status at the receiving university. Please note that some programs may have GPA eligibility standards and/or performance criteria that may limit access into some majors even if defined coursework has been completed. Such requirements will be clearly spelled out in the transfer agreement.”  
   Rationale: Specific programs, such as allied health, sciences and technology, art, and music have either additional GPA eligibility standards and/or performance criteria that all prospective majors must meet.

4. Delete the line: “To complete a baccalaureate degree at a State University, students will be required to complete no more than half of the requirements for the baccalaureate degree.”  
   Rationale: The sentence states that students only need to complete half of a program’s requirements.

5. Change the passage “…create a single pathway from any Connecticut Community Colleges to a Connecticut State University and Charter Oak State College for every baccalaureate major” to “…create transparent pathways from Connecticut Community Colleges to Connecticut State Universities and Charter Oak State College for baccalaureate majors and concentrations.”  
   Rationale: The sentence indicates that every major must be able to be completed by a student attending any Community College. This may not be feasible. To cite one example, the Biology programs at all four state universities expect that a student will have completed Chem I, Chem II, Organic Chem I, and Organic Chem II by the end of their sophomore year. Although some CCC offer these courses, not all do. To comply with the stated policy, the CCCs would have to increase their offerings so that they all offer Org Chem II, or the quality of the Biology programs must be diluted.

   In addition, the line would require any new major program to be able to be supported by not just one but by every community college.

6. Permit more than one transfer program for majors and concentrations that have large substantive differences.  
   Rationale: Many majors, such as biology and communication, have significantly different courses of study at the respective universities. Homogenizing these programs that can be served from a single transfer degree will significantly reduce the vitality and diversity of the program, including employment opportunities for our students (See the memo from Don Adams in the addenda).

7. Acknowledge that for a small number of majors, courses in the baccalaureate prerequisite chain may not be available at every or perhaps any Connecticut Community College. Therefore, students in these areas may be best served by early transfer or the ability to attend particular courses at the Connecticut State University as a non-matriculated student.  
   Rationale: For example, the B.S.E.D. program in Music requires students to have a sequenced music theory class and an ensemble experience for each semester in a student’s first two years.

8. The timeline needs to be modified.  
   Rationale: Prior to the setting of deadlines and a timeline, an implementation plan that specifies resources, personnel and processes must be determined. Transfer Associate Degrees are new degree programs. An expectation of completing and publicizing these programs by July 1 does not even permit compliance with the BORs own process for the review of new programs that was enacted in February 2012.
9. Change the line that reads “approved by the relevant curricular committees” to “reviewed by the relevant curricular committees for a decision to approve, modify or refer back for further work.”
   
   Rationale: Principles of shared governance require curriculum committees to operate as adjudicating bodies.

10. Specify an accountable organizational structure, process and personnel for implementing the transfer and articulation policy and continual monitoring of performance and effectiveness in achieving the policy objectives
   
   Rationale: The policy goals cannot be achieved without some organizing body or committee to undertake the difficult tasks ahead. It is difficult even to formulate a positive or negative opinion about the matter without understanding the process by which the goals would move toward specified programs.

Closing Remarks

Overwhelmingly, faculties, across our institutions, have expressed great interest and a strong willingness to participate in the work required to implement a comprehensive transfer and articulation policy. The major concerns raised, as evidenced by the faculty advisory committee’s recommendations, require a detailed implementation plan. By definition, such a plan needs to be a collaborative effort on the part of system leadership and faculty. Very importantly, the administration needs to allocate the necessary and appropriate resources, expertise and sufficient time to organize and structure the details. In addition, the plan needs to encompass ways to assure a sustainable system that has the capability, capacity, flexibility, reliability and durability to serve the greatest number of students interested and qualified to achieve baccalaureate degrees starting at the Connecticut Community Colleges and finishing at the Connecticut State Universities and Charter Oak State College.

Using the 20-80 Pareto principle, such an implementation plan typically should identify key areas where optimal results can be achieved readily and then move to areas of greater difficulty. Additionally, with an estimated 1,500 students out of a total of approximately 60,000 presently benefitting from transfers from Connecticut Community Colleges to the Connecticut State Universities and Charter Oak State College, the possibility of making significant gains in a relatively reasonable timeframe are encouraging.

At the same time, our community colleges have many arrangements with the state universities, other colleges and universities, including the University of Connecticut that should continue even as the new policy is implemented. One of the key lessons learned in higher education by our students is how to discern among a range of choices to find the pathway that best suits their career and life goals. Having multiple educational opportunities is in the best interests of our students.

Another important opportunity presented by the BOR’s initiative is to continue work already underway on our campuses related to enriching the traditional course approach to higher education with a competency-based model. The model considers learning outcomes and assessments that define what students should be able to do in careers and life based on what they learned in their classes, laboratories sessions and clinical and practical exercises. We strongly believe the alignment of competency based outcomes and assessments will benefit our students, as well as the employers who hire them.

We appreciate this opportunity to present our colleagues’ insights and viewpoints along with our analysis and recommendations. We look forward to a productive, mutually beneficial relationship with the regents as we work on this proposal and other matters that come before us. I am here with my colleagues on the committee and other interested faculty who were able to attend. We are available to take your questions.