New York State Education Department/New York State Higher Education Services Corporation

As part of our research into how other colleges and systems organize their degree pathways, with particular attention to requirements and practices in New York State, we have contacted the New York State Education Department (SED), which has confirmed several key aspects to bear in mind as we move forward:

1) The only programs in New York State for which guidelines specify a minimum number of credits in a major are teacher education programs, which require a minimum of 30 credits.

2) Although SED registers only full programs of study (rather than majors), it is expected that baccalaureate programs will consist of about 30 credits in the major field of study, 30 credits of general education, and 60 credits composed of liberal arts electives, major electives, and “free” electives. Some baccalaureate majors, especially in the sciences, may include 70 or more credits.

3) The major field is an essential element to consider because, as students are instructed on the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) website (http://www.hesc.com/content.nsf/SFC/Student_TAP_Coach_Declaration_of_a_Major):

   New York State Education Law requires you to be matriculated in an approved program (major) to be eligible for State student financial aid (includes TAP and other grants and scholarships). Although a strict interpretation of the law would require you to be enrolled in an approved program from your first semester to be eligible for aid, the State agencies involved with student aid agreed that students matriculated in two-year or four-year degree programs can defer declaring a major and still be eligible.

   If you are enrolled in a two-year academic program leading to an associate degree, you must declare a major no later than within 30 days from the end of your college’s add/drop period in the first term of your sophomore year.

   If you are enrolled in a four-year academic program leading to a baccalaureate degree, you must declare a major no later than within 30 days from the end of your college’s add/drop period in the first term of your junior year.