CUNY Pathways to Degree Completion
Steering Committee Meeting
Friday, October 7, 2011
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Summary of the Meeting

Committee members present:
- Michelle Anderson, Dean and Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law (Committee Chair)
- Michael Barnhart, Professor of Philosophy, Kingsborough Community College
- Laird Bergad, Distinguished Professor of Latin American and Caribbean History, Lehman College
- Theodore Brown, Professor of Computer Science, Queens College
- Katherine Conway, Associate Professor of Business Management, Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Edward Grossman, Professor of Mathematics, The City College of New York
- Mona Hadler, Professor of Art, Brooklyn College
- Orlando Hernandez, Professor of Modern Languages, Hostos Community College
- Patricia Mathews-Salazar, Professor of Anthropology, Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Elizabeth Nunez, Distinguished Professor of English, Hunter College
- Neal Phillip, Professor of Chemistry, Bronx Community College
- Elizabeth Beck, Student, LaGuardia Community College
- Steven Rodriguez, Student, Vice Chairperson for Legislative Affairs, University Student Senate
- Anne Lopes, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Committee members telephoning in:
- Paul Attewell, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, The Graduate Center
- William Fritz, Provost, College of Staten Island

Central Office staff support present:
- Andrea Baker, Executive Assistant to the Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost
- Erin Croke, Director of Undergraduate Education Policy

Dean Anderson called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.
I. Announcements

- Dean Anderson announced that the summary of the Steering Committee’s September 23, 2011, meeting has been posted to the Pathways website (http://www.cuny.edu/pathways).
- At the request of the CUNY Chairpersons’ Council of Health Disciplines, a memo was distributed titled “Promulgating a CUNY Pathways Learning Outcome in Undergraduate Health Education.”
- Dean Anderson distributed three possible models for the 30-credit Common Core (see Appendix). Each of these models was proposed via email by Steering Committee members after the prior meeting discussion at which many more Common Core models were analyzed. Each of the remaining models included two required English/Communication courses, 1 required math course, and 1 required science course. Each also included flexible Common Core credits organized within thematic areas. Models varied in terms of whether 4-credit math and science courses were included or whether an exception was established such that students could fulfill the 3-credit science and math categories with 4-credit courses. Models also varied based on the specificity of the distribution requirements across the thematic areas.

II. Discussion of Areas and Credit Allocations for the 30-credit Common Core

- A committee member also proposed a new model for consideration at the meeting. This proposal would allow each college to decide whether to include 4-credit courses or all 3-credit courses in the Core. The model would include 6-credits of English required of all students and then 24 flexible credits arranged within the thematic areas. The number of courses within the thematic areas would not be specified, such that colleges could decide whether to include 4-credit courses or not. It was argued that such a model might result in departments offering both 3- and 4-credit courses. Students might not have sufficient 3-credit courses to take or might elect to take all 4-credit courses resulting in fewer courses completed as part of the Core. Throughout the following dialog, committee members considered this proposal along with the other three previously offered.
- Steering Committee members raised the following questions:
  i. Will individual academic programs at the community colleges be permitted to specify requirements within the Core? It was noted that the Core will comprise half of the credits for an AA or AS degree, leaving academic programs just 30 credits for major requirements. It was suggested that departments might recommend entry courses for the major that could be completed as part of the Core.
  ii. If foreign languages are included in the Core, may students opt out of the requirement if they are deemed proficient in foreign language? Committee members suggested that it would depend if foreign languages were required or optional. If optional, students would be required to take something else within the Core if proficient in a foreign language.
iii. Will colleges be required to include courses from all listed disciplines in the areas of the Common Core? Dean Anderson clarified that colleges will choose the courses and disciplines that will populate the areas of the Common Core. This means that each college has the flexibility to determine what its own “native students” (those who start at the college) will take as part of the Common Core.

- The following issues were discussed by committee members:
  
i. The importance of insuring breadth of exposure and a strong liberal arts foundation within the Common Core. It was proposed that students be prevented from taking multiple courses in the same discipline. Other committee members indicated that colleges should have the discretion to include a multitude of disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas in the Core, and a better approach might be to require that students take no more than one or two courses in a discipline. It was said that limiting students to only a single course per discipline would not allow students to take full advantage of the thematic categories, especially in the area of foreign language.

  
ii. The committee discussed the place of foreign languages in the Common Core. It was indicated that students should have the opportunity to receive foreign language instruction, yet the committee raised a concern that many CUNY students speak English as a second language and so it was important that the Core insure that students master English.

  
iii. The committee discussed how best to accommodate math and science in the Common Core. Dean Anderson indicated that 4-credit science and math courses are common throughout the curriculum, while 3-credit science and math courses are also widely used. A survey of the colleges appeared to indicate that 4 credit-science and math requirements predominate.

  - Some committee members felt that it was important to maintain respect for the curricular structures currently in place and allow for 4-credit math and science courses. It was stressed by several committee members that these are crucial fields that must not be minimized in the Common Core. It was noted that CUNY is charged with providing opportunities to students who do not have strong backgrounds in science, and that lab science provides an important opportunity for students to interact with the natural world, with this opportunity extending to students who do not plan to major in a STEM field. It was suggested that including a 3-credit science requirement as part of the Core would not allow for lab science and would result in more limited exposure to lab science for students.

  - However, it was also pointed out that including a 4-credit science requirement might mean that students would have to complete a lab
science course and that existing 3-credit science options might therefore drop away. Some committee members argued that the Core is designed to provide introductory exposure and that a 3-credit science course would suffice for this. Further, committee members indicated that a 3-credit science course (along with limitation of other courses to 3 credits) in the Core would best preserve breadth of exposure by allowing 10 courses to be included. It was stressed that just 9 courses could be included in the Core if 4 credits were allocated to certain areas, which some members felt gave shorter shift to the humanities and social sciences.

iv. The committee discussed the possibility of proposing a Common Core of all 3-credit courses with an exception for a lab science course. Students would be allowed to fulfill the science requirements with a 4-credit course as long as the course counted toward the major in that field. It was suggested that an exception would also be necessary in the area of math, as there are also many 4-credit math courses and faculty have determined that such courses require more instructional hours. The need for exceptions was perceived as especially important for STEM students who must often begin a series of 4-credit math and science courses early in their academic careers. Some committee members felt that such exceptions would be acceptable, while others were concerned that many other fields would lobby to include 4-credit courses in the Core. They suggested that developing a Core that does not necessitate exceptions might better maintain the integrity of the Core. Another option suggested was to structure lab science with a separate 1-credit course for the lab; students could opt to take the lab for elective or major credit or could take just the lecture portion of the course for general education credit.

v. The proposed division of the Core into some required elements and some flexible elements was questioned. Some committee members felt that only English should be a required element of the Core. It was suggested that specifying what is most important for students to learn is somewhat arbitrary. Other committee members felt that English, Math and Science should each be required elements, however, as these components are considered basic to doing collegiate work and many other universities organize general education around such required elements.

• After substantial dialogue, Dean Anderson initiated a series of issue-specific votes. By clear majority votes, the Steering Committee decided that the structure of the Common Core should include distributional requirements rather than no restrictions; flexible thematic areas rather than disciplinary-specific areas; and English, Math, and Science as required elements within the Core rather than just English as a required
element in the Core. Also by majority vote, the committee decided to limit a
student’s courses in the thematic areas to one per discipline to broaden coverage.

- As a result of the vote to include these narrow distributional requirements within the
Core, the proposed 3-credit Common Core model with explicit disciplinary divisions
within the thematic areas was withdrawn.

- After active deliberation by all members of the committee and the series of issue-
specific votes, the committee then voted between the 3-credit Common Core with
Recommendation on 4-credit Lab Sciences and the 3 and 4-credit Common Core.
The Steering Committee selected the model with a mix of 3- and 4-credit courses and
with no exceptions.

- After selecting the model with a mix of 3- and 4-credit courses, the proposed
additional credit for English (at 7 credits) was discussed. Committee members
reported that writing is an area of weakness for CUNY students and the extra credit
would be helpful to enhance writing instruction. Others expressed concern that the
addition of a credit to English composition seemed arbitrary. It was proposed that the
additional credit in the model for English instead be allocated as a floating extra
credit to be used at the discretion of each college or simply be placed among the
flexible thematic credits. Concerns were expressed that a floating extra credit might
not be utilized effectively or might result in the model being overly complex. Another
proposal was to include just 4 credits for English (one course) and the additional 3
credits would be included in the flexible common core credits to enhance the
humanities offerings. By majority vote, the committee decided to keep 7 credits for
English.

- The committee then made the following refinements to the model:
  i. A specification that all courses within the Common Core be liberal arts. It was
     reported that New York State specifies that AS programs must include 30
     liberal arts credits and AA programs must include 45 liberal arts credits.
  ii. A decision to include Communication as a discipline noted within the
      “Creative Expressions” area.
  iii. A decision to include Computer Science as a discipline noted within the
      “Individual and Society” area.
  iv. A decision to alter than name of the “English, Writing, and Communication”
      area to “English Composition.”
• The Steering Committee then agreed to recommend the following structure for the 30-credit Common Core at CUNY to the Working Committee.

**Structure of the Common Core**

**English Composition**: 7 credits  
**Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning**: 4 credits  
**Natural and Physical Sciences**: 4 credits

**Flexible Common Core Credits**: five, 3-credit, liberal arts courses for 15 credits in the following four areas, with at least one course from each area and no more than one course in any particular discipline:

1. **World Cultures**—courses drawn from foreign languages, anthropology, history, political science, economics, world literature, and other fields addressing global cultures.

2. **U.S. Experience in its Diversity**—courses drawn from history, political science, economics, sociology, U.S. literature, and other fields addressing the U.S. experience in its diversity.

3. **Creative Expression**—courses drawn from the fine arts, creative writing, communication, music, theater, and other fields addressing creative expression.

4. **Individual and Society**—courses drawn from anthropology, philosophy, psychology, religion, computer science and other fields addressing the relationship between the individual and society.

• Dean Anderson indicated that she would draft a description of the model and the advantages of this model, as she thought the Steering Committee saw it, and circulate the proposal to the Working Committee that afternoon for feedback and input.

III. Discussion of Learning Outcomes to Define the Areas and Mapping of Learning Goals onto Areas

• Dean Anderson reminded committee members that, once the Task Force settled on a structure for the Common Core, it would have to devise learning outcomes to define all the areas of the Common Core. Learning outcomes should be devised such that courses could be included or excluded from the area based on the wording of the learning outcomes.

• Dean Anderson distributed a document with examples of learning outcomes from other systems, which were already distributed to Task Force members earlier in the semester, which pertain to the proposed areas of the Common Core.
IV. Discussion of Retreat
  • Dean Anderson indicated that a full-day retreat will take place on October 14, 2011, with the full Pathways Task Force.
  • The structure for the Common Core and learning outcomes will be discussed at the retreat.

V. Next steps
  • The draft structure for the Common Core will be circulated to the Working Committee for feedback later on Friday.
  • Steering Committee members will draft possible learning outcomes to define the areas of the Common Core for the full Task Force to consider at the October 14, 2011, retreat.

The meeting adjourned at 12:28 p.m.
Appendix
Common Core Models for Discussion

3-credit Common Core with Recommendation on 4-credit Lab Sciences

English, Writing, and Communications: 2 courses for 6 credits
Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: 1 course for 3 credits
Natural and Physical Sciences: 1 course for 3 credits

Flexible Common Core Credits: 6 courses for 18 credits in the following areas, with at least one course from each of the following 5 areas:

1. World Cultures—courses drawn from foreign languages, anthropology, history, political science, economics, world literature, and other fields addressing global cultures.
2. U.S. Experience in its Diversity—courses drawn from history, political science, economics, sociology, U.S. literature, and other fields addressing the U.S. experience in its diversity.
3. Creative Expression—courses drawn from the fine arts, creative writing, music, dance, media arts, theater, and other fields addressing creative expression.
4. Individual and Society—courses drawn from anthropology, philosophy, psychology, religion, and other fields addressing the relationship between the individual and society.
5. Scientific World—courses drawn from computer science, the natural and physical sciences, mathematics, statistics, logic, technology studies, and other fields addressing the scientific world.

Recommendation for Science Courses with Labs
The Pathways Task Force recommends that colleges be required to offer enough 3-credit courses for all students to satisfy the Natural and Physical Sciences credits of the Common Core. The Task Force also recommends that colleges be allowed to offer 4-credit science courses with laboratories to satisfy the Natural and Physical Sciences credits of the Common Core, particularly for those who intend to major in STEM fields, provided:

1. This narrow exemption for 4-credit courses applies only to science courses with laboratories. It does not apply to courses in any other field, nor does it apply to science courses without labs.
2. The CUNY-wide Committee, consisting predominantly of faculty, tasked with reviewing and approving all courses proposed for the Common Core will not approve any 4-credit science course with a laboratory until after the submitting college has had approved a sufficient number of 3-credit science courses for students’ general education.
3. A college cannot require a student to take a 4-credit science course with a lab to satisfy any area of the Common Core. It may, however, recommend or require a student to take a 4-credit science course with a lab to satisfy the requirements of a major.
4. The college submitting a 4-credit science course with a laboratory for approval to satisfy the Natural and Physical Sciences credits of the Common Core must certify that the course submitted counts toward the major in that field.
3 and 4-credit Common Core with No Exceptions

English, Writing, and Communications: 2 courses for 7 credits
Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: 1 course for 4 credits
Natural and Physical Sciences: 1 course for 4 credits

Flexible Common Core Credits: 5 courses for 15 credits in the following four areas, with at least one course from each area:

1. World Cultures—courses drawn from foreign languages, anthropology, history, political science, economics, world literature, and other fields addressing global cultures.
2. U.S. Experience in its Diversity—courses drawn from history, political science, economics, sociology, U.S. literature, and other fields addressing the U.S. experience in its diversity.
3. Creative Expression—courses drawn from the fine arts, creative writing, music, dance, media arts, theater, and other fields addressing creative expression.
4. Individual and Society—courses drawn from anthropology, philosophy, psychology, religion, and other fields addressing the relationship between the individual and society.

3-credit Common Core with Math Variant for STEM Students

English, Writing, and Communications: 2 courses for 6 credits
Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: 1 course for 3 credits (with 4-credit option for STEM disciplines)
Natural and Physical Sciences: 1 course for 3 credits

Flexible Common Core Credits: 6 courses for 18 credits in the following areas, with at least one course from each of the following 5 areas:

1. World Cultures—courses in foreign languages or world literature.
2. U.S. Experience in its Diversity—courses in history, political science, or economics.
3. Creative Expression—courses in the fine arts, music, dance, media arts, or theater.
4. Individual and Society—courses in anthropology, philosophy, religion, or sociology.
5. Scientific World—courses in computer science, the natural and physical sciences, mathematics, or technology studies.