CUNY Pathways to Degree Completion
Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday, July 27, 2011
2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Summary of the Meeting

Committee members present:
- Michelle Anderson, Dean and Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law (Committee Chair)
- Paul Attewell, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Graduate Center
- 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
- Mona Hadler, Professor of Art, Brooklyn 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, The City College of New York
- William Fritz, Provost, College of Staten Island
- Anne Lopes, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Committee members telephoning in:
- Edward Grossman, Professor of Mathematics, The City College of New York
- Orlando Hernandez, Professor of Modern Languages, Hostos Community College

Guests (present only for early portion of the meeting):
- Matthew Goldstein, Chancellor, The City University of New York
- Alexandra W. Logue, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost, The City University of New York

Central Office staff support present:
- Erin Croke, Director of Undergraduate Education Policy
- David Crook, University Dean for Institutional Research and Assessment
- Erika Dreifus, Director of Communications for the Office of Academic Affairs
- Dave Fields, Special Counsel to the Chancellor

Dean Anderson called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m.
I. Committee Charge: Chancellor Matthew Goldstein

- In delivering the committee’s charge, Chancellor Goldstein thanked all of the committee members for their participation. He said that the committee’s work is vitally important.
- The Chancellor shared several concerns that he considers to have informed the Pathways initiative. Some of these concerns focused on the issue of transferability. For example, the Chancellor said that when he brings tuition increases before the Board of Trustees, he is always mindful of how much money students have to spend because of impediments that the system has placed in their way, including impediments to seamless transfer. The Chancellor said that the amount of money students must spend due to these impediments far exceeds the cost of a tuition increase. But another issue connected with transferability is a moral one. The Chancellor said that inequities in how transfer credits are awarded and withheld are “just not right.”
- The Chancellor addressed concerns specific to general education. He told the committee that he expects the process to enhance the quality of content in general education courses across the University, in part by aligning content along agreed-upon, rigorous learning outcomes. The Chancellor also expressed the belief that by reforming general education at CUNY and making it less prescriptive than it has been (as when he was himself a student at City College in the 1960s), the University will allow students more room for intellectual exploration. He noted that a nationwide scan of the best public universities reveals that CUNY is out of step with respect to how many credits are currently imposed in general-education curricula. The new framework will reduce the credits to a level that is more consistent with national norms. Moreover, the Chancellor expects that the changes under way will alleviate some of the uncertainty too many students experience as they navigate through the CUNY curriculum.
- The Chancellor concluded his remarks with the observation that for a student to come to a university and leave without a degree is a tragedy. What the committee is doing will help to raise standards and increase student success.

II. Overview of the Pathways Initiative: Executive Vice Chancellor Logue

- EVC Logue thanked all of the committee members for their participation and noted the vital importance of its work, saying that what the committee decides will affect hundreds of thousands of students in years to come.
- The committee’s recommendations will be totally its own. EVC Logue stated that the central office has no preconceived notions regarding how the credits should be divided up, what areas should constitute the Common Core, or what learning outcomes should support those areas.
- EVC Logue also asked that committee members put aside their college and disciplinary affiliations and think of themselves as representatives of the University.
- The University Faculty Senate (UFS) had been asked to nominate faculty to be appointed to the steering committee. No nominations were received. Nonetheless, the committee does include two faculty members who are part of the University
Faculty Senate: Professor Conway, who serves on the UFS Executive Committee and also chairs its Community College Caucus, and Professor Barnhart, who was until recently also a member of the Executive Committee.

- In describing the Pathways initiative, EVC Logue emphasized that certain principles had been and continued to remain essential. These principles include a deep belief that the faculty should decide on curricular matters and that the individual colleges should retain as much individuality and flexibility as possible. To those ends, this committee will be focusing on a 30-credit “Common Core,” but those 30 credits should be structured so as to allow colleges to retain individuality and flexibility. Each baccalaureate-granting college will have another 12 credits to allot as it sees fit.

- In an effort to foster free discussion within the committee, meeting notes will be distributed and posted online, but will not attribute comments to individual committee members. Dean Anderson will serve as spokesperson for the committee, and requests for public comment should be directed to her.

- The central office is prepared to help the committee in any way that the committee wants, including providing data and analyses and assisting with communications.

III. Welcome and Introductions: Dean Anderson

- After both Chancellor Goldstein and EVC Logue left the room, Dean Anderson welcomed the committee members and thanked them for their participation. She asked each committee member to introduce himself/herself. Self-introductions were made.

IV. Steering Committee work plan and procedures: Dean Anderson

- The committee’s recommendations to Chancellor Goldstein are due by December 1, 2011. A draft proposal must therefore be circulated to the CUNY community by November 1 in order to allow time for the colleges to assess and comment fully on the proposed plan, and for the Task Force to revise the plan based on college feedback. A question was asked concerning the time frame of the Task Force’s work. It was pointed out that, per the resolution passed by the Board on June 27, 2011, Pathways implementation is taking place over a span of years; the phase of work for which the Task Force is responsible, which will take place over the rest of the summer and through the fall, is but one of many phases, and a precursor to other necessary work.

- The Steering Committee will be assisted in its work by a larger Working Committee that will include faculty members from every CUNY college. Together, the Steering Committee and Working Committee comprise the Pathways Task Force.

- Dean Anderson reiterated the need for steering committee members to set aside their institutional and disciplinary affiliations, as well as their personal preferences. She asked them to focus on the typical CUNY student who wants an excellent general education curriculum that transfers in the University easily. The typical CUNY student must be working toward a meaningful degree.
Dean Anderson also reiterated that there will be an effort to balance the principles of candor and confidentiality of dialog with transparency and accountability to the wider CUNY community as the Steering Committee pursues its work. A website will provide the community with access to meeting agendas, meeting summaries, and copies of the documents, data, and reports that the committee members themselves are working with. If any committee members think that this balance can be achieved more effectively, they should speak with Dean Anderson.

The Steering Committee will hopefully dialogue to consensus and will follow Robert’s Rules of Order. Everyone appointed to the Steering Committee has a vote.

Dean Anderson introduced Central Office staff who will support the committee meetings. These nonvoting individuals include Mr. Fields, who will serve as parliamentarian and legal counsel; Dean Crook, whose office will endeavor to provide any CUNY data that the committee might need/request; Ms. Croke, who has studied general education across the CUNY campuses (and nationwide) and possesses a granular knowledge on current program requirements; and Dr. Dreifus, who will record meeting summaries.

Many other individuals, though not attending the meetings, will be available to support the committee on request. They include Annamarie Bianco, University Registrar, who has comprehensive knowledge about how courses are listed and grades are counted and transfer, as well as about e-permit, which allows students on one campus to take a course at another campus; Van Gizis, former provost and acting president and VP for administration at several campuses, and who is currently working on the CUNYfirst project; and Bob Ptachik, Senior University Dean for the Executive Office and Enrollment. Dean Ptachik is in charge of enrollment management, which includes transfer admissions, plus he is the chief person on the academic side concerning CUNYfirst.

The task before the committee is serious and ambitious. We appreciate everyone’s willingness to devote energy, time, and intellectual capital to the task.

V. Presentation of the Pathways Initiative (PowerPoint)

Dean Anderson conducted a PowerPoint presentation of the Pathways Initiative. Copies of the full presentation were included within the binders that were prepared for each committee member. The PowerPoint will be posted online for the community to access.

The ensuing discussion focused largely on the role of learning outcomes in the Pathways project. A question was asked concerning how many of the outcomes specified for a specific disciplinary or interdisciplinary area a college course would need to satisfy in order to be “counted” within that area.

VI. Review of background materials in the binders on CUNY curriculum and other systems of general education

The binders were reviewed. To the extent that copyright laws permit, binder materials will also be posted online.

A suggestion was made for a change on one document.
VII. Next steps

- Committee members should review the materials in the binder before the next meeting.
- Committee members should come to the next meeting prepared to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the two primary routes that have been outlined for completing the Board of Trustees’ charge to the Task Force:
  - Cross-Curricular Learning Outcomes Approach: Develop cross-curricular learning outcomes first, then identify Common Core areas and credit allocations, then map cross-curricular learning outcomes onto areas.
  - Specific Areas Learning Outcomes Approach: Identify Common Core areas and credit allocations first, then divide task force members up by areas to devise learning outcomes for each specific area.
- Must decide which direction the Task Force will go, which implicates the Working Committee and Steering Committee’s tasks, as well as the retreat on August 26.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m.