Associate Degrees of Transfer

Last year, I offered the reasons of why the Legislature, the Board of Governors and the Chancellor’s Office are compelling community colleges to create Associate Degrees of Transfer (ADT). In my November board report, and again in my March 28 Friday Update, I noted that the significant reasons for the state’s passing SB 1440 and SB 440 were the low completion and transfer rates at California Community Colleges. There was also a fiscal consideration. One estimate showed that SB 1440 could generate up to $160 million dollars annually in seat savings by reducing the number of excess units students take. The CSU estimated that they could provide access to roughly 40,000 additional community college students each year.

Under SB 1440, community colleges had a choice on which Transfer Model Curriculum (TMC) outlines they wanted to develop into an ADT. College of the Redwoods (CR) originally committed to develop 9 ADTs. Last year, our faculty colleagues helped the college go beyond what we had committed to by developing 13 of the new degrees. The 13 that have been approved by our Board of Trustees and are in the Chancellor’s Office approval process include Anthropology, Business, Early Childhood Education, English, Geology, History, Kinesiology, Mathematics, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Studio Arts. Another ADT, Administration of Justice, is under development now.

The efficacy and sustainability of the Associate Degree of Transfer at CR has been a topic of discussion in the Senate, Instructional Council, Enrollment Management Committee, and Expanded Cabinet.

Can our students benefit from an ADT? Yes, I believe that our students will benefit from having a clearly defined, narrowly focused, degree that is a guaranteed transfer to a CSU. Under SB 1440 students would take a set of courses that would enable them to attain an Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) that guarantees them admission with junior standing into the California State University (CSU) system. The ADT will eliminate confusion caused by different major preparation requirements for each CSU campus through the TMC—in essence simplifying the transfer pathway and creating a 2+2 program. There is very little argument that the college, and our students, will benefit by having an ADT. An ADT will provide a clear academic pathway from CR to a CSU. Having Associate Degrees of Transfer also has the potential of increasing enrollment, changing enrollment trends and increasing student completion.

Will we end up with all 13 or 14 ADTs in a year or two? Maybe not; but, I believe we should support them—as best we can—until evidence is presented that shows that the degree is not sustainable or needed. However, to support the ADTs, the administration has committed to developing a program that provides students, who declare an ADT, a guarantee that they will have a seat in a class they will need to complete their ADT. The class may not be on a day or time they want, but we will ensure sure the ADT courses are offered in the two year course scheduling sequence, and adding whether a class is part of an ADT to the “special considerations criteria” in the class cancellation process for Deans and Directors to consider when they look at class cancellations.
One of the issues raised last year was the linkage between development of an ADT and faculty positions. Making this linkage, while understandable, is mistaken. We cannot guarantee whether an ADT, or any other degree or certificate we offer for that matter, will be successful. Like any new initiative or program, we may not see a gain in enrollment in the short term; however, I understand that we may see an dip in enrollment in some courses associated with an ADT in the short term, however, last year, the Senate and Administration supported the Educational Pathway Task Force’s recommendation that determining the relevant need or demand of established local degrees or ADT should be treated the same as any other degree or “program” and should be reviewed in the program review or the AP 4021 process if appropriate. Remember, that the decision to discontinue any program or degree will not be based on a one or two year enrollment decline. We have created a process, memorialized in AP 4021 that uses trend data—not one or two years—in the analysis of a programs/degree’s efficacy.

We have to turn our attention now to discussing what ADTs will be developed in the future. We’re required to develop ADTs in AA/AS degree areas--Math, ECE, Studio Arts, AJ, Business, CIS, and Agriculture. From this required group, the only ADTs we need to develop are CIS and AG. The AG TMC is scheduled for release on September 1, 2014. Therefore, we should focus our strategic discussion on those “optional ADTs” not ones we are required to have.

We also have a process and criteria in place, developed by the Educational Pathways Task Force, and supported by the Academic Senate and Administration, that will guide faculty and administrator discussions in determining whether developing a “not required” TMC into an ADT makes strategic sense to the district. Criteria 1-4 must be satisfied. Criteria 5-7 are optional.

1. If one of our main feeder CSUs (HSU, Chico State, Sacramento State) has a specific baccalaureate degree and a TMC exists
2. If approximately 75% of courses called for in the TMC already exist
3. If courses in an ADT support enrollment in other courses/disciplines/areas (e.g. the ADT in Kinesiology supports enrollment in biology, chemistry)
4. If the ADT has courses that “overlap” with other degrees for multiple “on ramps and off ramps” for students to select other degree pathways
5. If students are taking a concentration of a particular ADT’s courses within a current local degree that provides evidence of student interest/demand
6. If the FTES/FTEF is projected to be above the district average
7. If the ADT aligns with local and/or regional job market expectations

Do we have to change all the degrees at CR under the SB 1440 and SB 440 mandates? No, we do not have to stop granting existing degrees. The ADT is an additional option for students who plan to transfer to a CSU and want the guarantees it offers.