

MOVING CREDIT: PATHWAYS TO DEGREE COMPLETION

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The current economy continues to call for a nimble workforce that can respond quickly to new skill needs and continued education. To meet this demand, students must have access to postsecondary opportunities in which the college credits are portable, especially from lower cost educational options offered by community colleges. One way to ensure portability is to establish strong pathways between community colleges and four-year institutions with clear guidelines on how credits transfer. The City College of New York (CUNY) currently is creating such a system with their Pathways to Degree Completion Initiative (Pathways).

THE NEED FOR PORTABLE CREDITS

Despite New York law defining CUNY as one University, its individual community colleges and four-year institutions accepted transfer credits inconsistently and had different requirements for general education. This unpredictable system was particularly a hindrance for community college students seeking a bachelor's degree within the CUNY system. The majority of CUNY bachelor degree college graduates are transfer students. In response, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution in June 2011, calling for a curricular structure to streamline transfers and enhance the quality of general education across the University to be in place by the fall of 2013.

PIECES OF THE PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

The Initiative consists of three parts: the general education framework, pathways for the largest transfer majors and full course transferability. The general education framework consists of a 30 credit General Core and a 12 credit College Option. Every student who completes an associate degree is required to complete the General Core, and the Core will transfer to all CUNY institutions. All CUNY students that enroll directly into bachelor's degree programs will be required to complete the 12 credit College Option, which will transfer among all CUNY four-year institutions. The pathways for the largest transfer majors will consist of three to six classes in those majors that will be accepted as prerequisites in all institutions that offer the major. Full course transferability will mean that all courses taken for credit at CUNY will be accepted for credit at every other CUNY college whether or not a specific equivalency exists at the transfer college.

THE PROCESS OF SETTING UP PATHWAYS

Recently, the Pathways Task Force, made up of students, faculty and administration, submitted and received approval on their recommendations for the general education framework. The CUNY Chancellor has established an Implementation Advisory Committee, which will facilitate interaction between the central office, the institutional administration and a faculty-led Course Review Committee. The Implementation Advisory Council is charged with reviewing campus submitted courses based on their suitability for the General Core. All of the Pathways policies and processes, including the General Core, will be reviewed and evaluated each year until 2016, and every three years thereafter.