

Give Students a Compass
Proposed Use of Funding in California for
Regional, Intersegmental Partnerships for General Education
July 20, 2010

Purpose: To recast the collaboration between California Community Colleges and the California State University with respect to general education and transfer.

- Currently the relationship is characterized by traditional course-to-course articulation, and counting credits toward GE “certification” as defined by the CSU. Certification clears incoming students of lower-division general education requirements at receiving universities.
- By shifting the focus to an agreed set of goals for student liberal learning, both the community colleges and the universities will be better able to create a more engaging and innovative curriculum, responsive to local needs and opportunities.
- We expect this to improve rates of successful transfer from California Community Colleges (currently around 25%) and graduation from California State Universities (currently around 50%).

The first step will be to support participation by teams of faculty from California’s public colleges and universities in the upcoming annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges & Universities, and to host a pre-meeting conference of California educators.

- Advance readings and virtual meetings will lay groundwork for the in-person meetings in January, 2011.
- Regional, intersegmental GE teams will continue to meet thereafter on the model of “Professional Learning Councils” developed by Cal-PASS.
- The regional consortia will share best practices in general education and may also develop small-scale pilot projects around GE and transfer, to inform improved state policy.

Background: California’s general education transfer curriculum affects millions of students each year, by setting the distribution areas and rules of articulation that apply community college coursework to degrees at the universities.

CSU Campuses

Bakersfield
Channel Islands
Chico
Dominguez Hills
East Bay

Fresno
Fullerton
Humboldt
Long Beach
Los Angeles
Maritime Academy

Monterey Bay
Northridge
Pomona
Sacramento
San Bernardino
San Diego

San Francisco
San José
San Luis Obispo
San Marcos
Sonoma
Stanislaus

The framework has been in place for thirty years, unaffected by a generation of advances in our understanding of how people learn and what keeps students engaged. The GE transfer curriculum resists change because:

- (1) California's universities and community colleges are separately organized.
- (2) Policy change that affects curriculum must begin with faculty, in a process that is time consuming and resource intensive.

As a result we make do with an unengaging, content-focused approach to general education, obscuring the purpose and relevance of liberal learning and likely contributing to the state's high rates of attrition, particularly among the underserved.

The CSU and CCC systems already collaborate in numerous meaningful ways:

- Disciplinary groups from every community college and public university in the state meet to discuss and align lower-division coursework to prepare for later work in the major.
- Regional consortia in the health professions share faculty, laboratory facilities, and clinical placements. Examples include Orange County (Fullerton Community College and Santa Ana Community College, in partnership with CSU Fullerton) and San Francisco (the Metro Health Academy, connecting City College of San Francisco with San Francisco State University).
- Regional groups from a range of disciplines meet under the auspices of Cal-PASS, to improve alignment across the whole pipeline from K-12 through community college and university.

Missing from these collegial relationships is attention to general education -- the part of the baccalaureate shared by all students.

Give Students a Compass: For the past two years the CSU has joined a multi-state effort led by the AAC&U to infuse more high-impact educational practices such as learning communities, faculty-student collaboration on research, and civic engagement into general education requirements in the lower division.

Recent research suggests such practices disproportionately benefit the historically underserved: students of color, the economically disadvantaged, and those whose parents didn't attend college.

In California, the effort to reform general education in the public universities is limited by the need to accommodate student mobility. The same beneficial structures that facilitate transfer inhibit efforts to get beyond the existing, lecture-based paradigm.

Activities To Be Funded under This Proposal: The CSU proposes a two-year effort to recast its relationship with California Community Colleges with respect to general education and transfer.

Fall, 2010: Appointment of four faculty and administrators from the community colleges, to join four counterparts from the CSU already serving on the Compass Project steering committee.

Fall, 2010: Publication of a Request For Proposals to all of the state's community colleges and state universities, inviting team participation in regional, intersegmental consortia focused on bringing more high-impact practices into general education.

January, 2011: Team attendance at the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, in San Francisco.

The AAC&U annual meeting is a national event that brings together educators from its 1200 member institutions and the best current thinking about higher education. Through its publications, institutes, and meetings, the AAC&U is the nation's leading voice for quality and innovation in undergraduate learning.

To take advantage of San Francisco's selection as the site for the 2011 Annual Meeting, we propose a pre-meeting conference for faculty in the California State Universities and California Community Colleges, to begin a re-evaluation of the structure and underlying assumptions of the state's GE transfer curriculum.

The AAC&U has agreed to special discounted pricing on registration for the meeting.

Spring, 2011: The steering committee will host regular follow-up meetings of two kinds:

1. In-person meetings of the regional intersegmental collaboratives.
2. Virtual meetings of all participants in the state.

The follow-up meetings will:

1. Encourage innovation and the exchange of ideas to improve general education *within the existing framework*.
2. Foster *regional pilot projects* to test alternative approaches to general education and transfer, that could one day inform a stronger statewide policy.

The spring follow-up meetings will benefit from guidance by:

- the **AAC&U**, to continue its close relationship with the CSU through its ongoing multi-state project *Give Students a Compass*.
- **Cal-PASS**, to provide experience with organizing data-driven, learning-centered intersegmental consortia on the model of its Professional Learning Councils, which have run since 2006.
- in the CSU, the **Chancellor's General Education Advisory Committee**, a group composed mostly of faculty representatives to the statewide Academic Senate, to insure that any pilot projects meet the standards of liberal learning expected of graduates of the California State University, as set forth in Title 5 and CSU Executive Order 1033.

Fall, 2011: Regional collaboratives will propose small-scale regional pilot projects to experiment with alternative approaches to general education and transfer.

Not all regional collaboratives will propose pilot projects. Of the regional networks created on the occasion of the AAC&U annual meeting, we expect roughly half to go on to the pilot project phase.

Fall, 2012: The CSU-CCC Compass Project steering committee will begin evaluation of pilot projects, looking for promising practices that could be shared among institutions or inform a new statewide GE transfer curriculum, according to these criteria:

- improved student GPA in subsequent coursework
- improved student persistence and degree completion
- scalability: implementation and maintenance must be reasonable and sustainable at statewide scale

Criteria for team selection: The eight-member steering committee, comprised of four faculty and administrators from the CSU and four faculty and administrators from the CCC, will write a detailed Request for Proposals. Generally, teams will be selected for their ability to affect change, either as pacers or resisters. Not all teams who participate are likely to create subsequent pilot projects.

Budget: Each designated team will consist of 2-5 faculty from a given institution. For each participant, this project will underwrite travel, meals, and registration for both the AAC&U Annual Meeting and the pre-meeting Conference for General Education in California. (The AAC&U has agreed to discounted registration as part of this project.)

We anticipate actual expenses of up to \$5,000 per team. All eight members of the steering committee will also attend. The CSU Office of the Chancellor will provide staff support and web and phone conferencing before and after the meetings at no cost.

Participation by 10 CCC faculty teams in January meetings (avg \$4,500/team)	\$45,000
Participation by 10 CSU faculty teams in January meetings (avg \$4,500/team)	\$45,000
January meeting attendance and travel for eight-member steering committee	\$10,000
Regional in-person meetings (assume eight regions continue)	\$40,000
Ongoing advice and support from Cal-PASS	\$40,000
Ongoing advice and support from AAC&U	\$40,000
Total	\$220,000

The project expects to identify viable regional pilot projects over the next year, that could be mounted at a range of budget levels. The CSU and AAC&U are currently seeking long-term support for those projects, separate from this solicitation.

References:

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