Office of Academic Affairs and the Provost

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Guidelines for Establishing and Revising SUNY Transfer Paths
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Introduction

This document describes the processes and procedures by which the SUNY Office of the Provost will determine when or whether to convene faculty discussion groups to either establish new Transfer Paths or to review and potentially revise existing Transfer Paths. The Transfer Paths represent the core knowledge and skills within academic disciplines, usually organized as academic concentrations and/or major programs, which students need to master by the end of the sophomore year to be able to complete a baccalaureate degree in two more years of full-time study. The content of the Transfer Paths, which have been created by SUNY faculty participating in system-wide discussion groups, varies by academic discipline.

The document is organized into three sections. First, the *New Transfer Paths* section describes the criteria, processes and procedures for convening a faculty discussion group to discuss a Transfer Path in an academic discipline that has yet to have a path identified. Second, the *Review and Revision* section outlines the criteria, processes and procedures that will be used to revise existing Transfer Paths, including a regular cycle of review, as well as off-cycle revisions that may be requested by SUNY disciplinary faculty. Finally, the *Background* section provides a brief overview of SUNY's Seamless Transfer policies and a history of the creation of the Transfer Paths.

The document also includes a list of relevant resources and contact information.

I. New Transfer Paths

The authority to convene a faculty group in an academic discipline which does yet have a Transfer Path rests with the SUNY Provost. However, this decision will be informed by collaborative discussions with both disciplinary faculty and the appropriate campus administrators. Consideration of a new academic disciplinary path can be triggered by several sources, including requests from disciplinary faculty, campus administrators, or students. Once a decision is reached by the SUNY Provost to consider creating a new Transfer Path in an academic discipline, data will be gathered to determine whether to convene a faculty discussion group. Factors considered may include, but are not limited to, numbers of transfer students in the discipline, numbers of sending and receiving institutions in a discipline, and the opinions of faculty in the discipline as to whether a Transfer Path in their discipline should be considered.

Previous Transfer Paths vary in the numbers of sending and receiving institutions that offer programs in the discipline. Therefore, there is no 'hard number,' that would trigger the decision to establish a new Transfer Path. In general, a mix of 8 sending and receiving campuses would indicate a sufficient minimum number of institutions to move forward with a Transfer Path discussion group. Disciplines with fewer sending and receiving campuses may warrant a different approach to support transfer students, such as facilitating campus-to-campus articulation agreements rather than a university-wide agreement.

Similarly, there is no minimum number of transfer students that would trigger convening a Transfer Path group. Small numbers of transfer students could be caused by different factors, depending on the discipline. On one hand, small numbers of transfer students in a discipline could be an indication that there is not sufficient demand by students. On the other hand, if SUNY-to-SUNY transfers are relatively small in a discipline in which larger numbers of transfers would be expected, this may indicate that students are transferring to non-SUNY schools because of intra-SUNY transfer problems. This would provide an indication that a Transfer Path may be warranted in the discipline in order to better align curricula between programs and guarantee the transfer of particular courses. Thus, numbers of transfer students are an important indicator to consider, but these data should be viewed within the larger context of the transfer patterns within the discipline under consideration.

The Office of the Provost may also contact campus academic deans and/or department chairs to collect opinions of disciplinary experts as to whether a Transfer Path is warranted in a discipline. Faculty experts would be able to provide valuable guidance on curricular details and trends in the field that can inform the decision on whether to convene a discussion group. While each academic discipline will be considered on a case-by case basis, the data sources cited above provide some guidance as to the important factors that will be considered in the creation of a new Transfer Path.

New Transfer Paths: Process and Procedures

Once the decision has been made to convene a Transfer Path discussion group, the next step is for the SUNY Office of the Provost to canvas campuses for faculty representatives. Following the 2014 Transfer Path faculty review model, each campus that offers a program in the discipline is allowed to have one faculty representative serve in the group. The Office of the Provost will contact each campus Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and Campus Governance Leader (CGL) and provide the materials and instructions for submitting a faculty representative. Each campus should follow its local shared governance processes to select the right candidate, and it is not up to the SUNY Office of the Provost to approve campus selections. In the request for a participant, each campus will be asked to indicate whether their faculty representative would be willing to serve in a leadership role for the group as co-chair.

Faculty representatives are expected to provide expertise in their discipline and represent the views of their campus in the best interest of supporting transfer students. In order to keep the discussion groups manageable, only one representative from each SUNY campus that has a program in the discipline may participate. Therefore, it is critical that each faculty representative

confer with their disciplinary colleagues on campus and represent, to the best of their ability, their views on the curricular matters under discussion.

The goal is to have each disciplinary discussion co-chaired by a two-person team, one from a community college associate degree program and the other from a state-operated baccalaureate degree program. The co-chairs will facilitate the discussions and then provide a written summary of the advisory group's recommendations to the Office of the Provost for the creation of a disciplinary Transfer Path. The co-chairs will also serve as points of contact with Provost Office staff to facilitate the needed supports, such as organizing meetings, conference calls, setting up and maintaining the online discussion space, administering surveys, etc.

Processes and procedures for communication have varied by discussion group. While the overall goal is the same, academic disciplines have different cultures and preferred ways of communicating. The SUNY Office of the Provost wishes to respect and support these differences, and staff will take direction from the co-chairs on the best methods to facilitate discussions. Communications and specific instructions will be communicated to group members throughout the project by the group's co-chairs and Provost Office staff, as needed.

To allow for adequate feedback from campus stakeholders and to facilitate a timely review by the SUNY Provost, the final recommendations document should be submitted no later than March 31 of the academic year in which the discussions are held. Following a campus comment period and proposal review, the expectation is that the final Transfer Path will be posted online by May 31st of that academic year. Where necessary, curricular changes should be approved in the subsequent academic year and implemented for students entering the following fall semester. For example, if a Transfer Path is published in May 2016, it should be implemented for students entering fall semester 2017. This will allow one full year to implement any curricular changes.

II. Review and Revision of Existing Transfer Paths

The Transfer Paths are designed to be responsive to changes in the discipline as needed. However, the capacity to change must be balanced against the need for consistency so that campuses can successfully implement the content into academic programs in alignment with their local campus processes in order to support transfer students. In addition, there is a continuing need to consult the appropriate faculty across the system before any changes are approved. These needs can be met by establishing processes and procedures for both a regular cycle of review, as well as revisions that may be required due to changing needs that fall outside the boundaries of the regular review cycle.

Prior experience has demonstrated that it is of critical importance to pace discussions so as to accommodate campus and system workloads. Thus, all disciplines should not be reviewed in the same year and the review cycles will need to be staggered. To determine the order of assembling faculty review groups the Office of the Provost will conduct a survey in fall 2018 of all department chairs within the academic discipline at SUNY campuses that offer programs in this area. The survey will ask participants to review the Transfer Path and indicate whether they think the curriculum needs immediate revision or whether it is sufficient as it is currently written.

The survey will be constructed to weigh the intensity of faculty judgment, which will indicate the order in which the disciplinary paths need to be reviewed and potentially revised.

The regular cycle of review should begin during the fall semester of the third year following the implementation of a Transfer Path. For example, for Transfer Paths that were implemented for fall 2015, the Office of the Provost will begin the review cycle in the fall of 2018. This allows for at least a full year's experience with students who transfer under the revised curricula. The initial round of reviews will occur over a three-year period, beginning in the 2018-19 academic year, with the order of review determined by the results of the survey: highest priority paths reviewed first, with the remainder reviewed during the second and third years and every three years thereafter.

The paths thus normally will be reviewed on a three-year cycle, with opportunity to review and revise paths should demonstrated needs arise outside the regular review cycle. Off-cycle reviews, then, can be requested by SUNY campus administrators or faculty members at any time. However, revisions to the work of SUNY faculty disciplinary committees outside the normal review cycle requires that the stakeholders requesting the change demonstrate a serious problem with the Transfer Path. The authority to consider off-cycle review requests and to engage with representative faculty to facilitate revisions to existing Transfer Path rests with the SUNY Provost. Once reviewed off-cycle, the path would then be placed into a cycle for consideration three years after this review.

III. Background

SUNY Seamless Transfer Policy

On December 17, 2012, the SUNY Board of Trustees passed resolution 2012-089 that established the current policy framework governing transfer across the SUNY system (Seamless Transfer). While this policy is the most comprehensive transfer policy to date, it is but the latest in a long line of Board actions affirming and reaffirming SUNY's commitment to a seamless transfer policy. In fact, when the SUNY system was re-imagined in the late 1960's, it included the expectation that students would transfer from one campus to another.

Citing SUNY's ongoing commitment to both academic excellence and supporting transfer student success, the Seamless Transfer resolution clarified curricular expectations in the following areas:

- "The first two years of full-time study of an undergraduate program leading to an A.A., A.S., or bachelor's degree will be designed to include: (1) the SUNY General Education Requirement, with seven of ten areas and 30 credits; and (2) a sufficient number of foundational major courses, as well as associated cognate courses for a bachelor's degree to be completed in two additional years of full-time study. Waivers will be approved for programs with exceptional requirements."

- "Each SUNY campus will grant credit to transfer students for successfully completing, as defined, at any SUNY campus: (1) SUNY General Education Requirement courses; and (2) transfer path foundational major courses, as well as associated cognate courses."

- "Each SUNY campus will limit its degree requirements to 64 credits for A.A., A.S., and A.A.S. degrees, and 126 credits for bachelor's degrees, unless there is a compelling justification for additional credits, and ensure that local graduation requirements that exceed the SUNY General Education Requirement do not cause a student to exceed those credit limits."

The building blocks of the 2012 Seamless Transfer resolution were not new, as they incorporated elements that had been developed over more than a decade of policy and emerging practice. The Board of Trustees established a system-wide set of General Education Requirements (SUNY-GER) in 1998, and passed a significant revision in 2010. Together, these two resolutions created the current SUNY-GER: 30 credits in at least 7 of 10 mandated content areas, including Basic Communication and Mathematics.

The Transfer Paths were created in two stages, each of which relied on SUNY faculty disciplinary committees. These disciplinary committees were formed for each major, beginning with the most popular and continuing in decreasing popularity for transfer. For the purposes of this work, 'majors' were defined as both traditional and emerging specific programs of study that have similar lower division coursework.

In designing the process and selecting faculty for the disciplinary committees, the Provost's office worked with faculty governance leadership, the Student Mobility Steering Committee, and campus Chief Academic Officers. The faculty committees were asked to verify typical course lists and determine the content to be required for those courses, with flexibility in the length of content descriptors depending on committee discretion. Drafts of the transfer paths were distributed across the system, with disciplinary faculty invited to comment. This process had several months lead time, but the Student Mobility Steering Committee received very few suggestions for changes.

Following the passage of the 2012 resolution, the Office of the Provost developed the Memorandum to Presidents (MTP), which provided guidance on issues such as communication, oversight, timelines, and assessment of the policy. The final version of the MTP was published on June 13, 2013 and distributed widely across the system to the relevant groups and offices.

Once they returned for classes in the fall of 2013, faculty began to grasp the scope of the changes involved, and the Transfer Paths, in particular, became a source of concern. Many faculty who had not directly been part of the process saw the paths for their disciplines for the first time, and many who had participated in the initial process were unaware that the content outlined in the Transfer Paths were now required to be included in their degree programs. Faculty governance leadership communicated these concerns from their constituents to the SUNY Provost.

In response, the Office of the Provost worked with the faculty governance leaders to develop a much more inclusive review process, one that extended invitations to a faculty discipline-specific representative from each SUNY campus that offered programs in that discipline. Accommodating the more inclusive model of shared governance in the disciplines required expanding faculty participation in the Transfer Path discussions far beyond what had been done previously, but the implementation date for the initiative remained fall 2015.

The 2014 review process was the second phase of the course identification of the current Transfer Paths Invitations were sent via email to 1,248 faculty representatives to join online discussion groups in their academic disciplines in the SUNY Learning Commons. The groups were facilitated by two faculty co-chairs and supported by Provost Office staff. To accommodate the number of participants, the process relied on the SUNY Learning Commons, which offered an online platform to post information to the group, maintain complex discussion threads, and create group discussions to facilitate the necessary deliberations by faculty. The online discussions were augmented by conference calls, electronic surveys, and face-to-face meetings, when needed. The faculty review period, January through March, 2014, resulted in the submission of revisions to 32 Transfer Paths.

Since this review period, additional Transfer Paths were completed in Computer Science, Dietetics, and Sport Management and several Engineering Technology disciplines. At present, SUNY faculty have developed 59 Transfer Paths. These disciplines cover over 95% of all transfer students within SUNY, and include enrollments collectively of over 166,000 students in approximately 1,700 programs for fall 2015.

IV. Resources and Contacts

1) The Student Mobility web page, hosted by the Office of the Provost, contains links to policies, course information, Transfer Paths, and student appeals. Resources include:
    a. Approved SUNY-GER Course Dashboards. These dashboards are the source of record for all SUNY approved general education courses.
    b. General Education. This page outlines the SUNY General Education Requirements (SUNY-GER), and includes policies, procedures, and resources.
    c. Related Policy Documents:
        i. Memorandum to Presidents – Seamless Transfer
        ii. Seamless Transfer Requirements Resolution 2012
        iii. Trustee Resolution 2009-138
        iv. Memorandum to Presidents 2010-1
        v. Memorandum to Presidents 2011-1
    d. Seamless Transfer Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
    e. Student Mobility Dashboard. This dashboard is the source of record for campus courses designated as Transfer Path courses. Users can sort by sector, campus, academic discipline and course.
    f. Student Appeals Process. The student appeal process is available for students who do not agree with a decision related to the conferring or placement of transfer credit for by their current SUNY college for credit earned at a prior SUNY institution.
    g. Campus Appeals Process. The Campus Appeals Process is available for SUNY faculty or administrators to initiate an appeal to the SUNY Office of the Provost

for matters relating to the implementation of Seamless Transfer policies. Issues that may be appealed include the transfer of guaranteed courses (i.e. Transfer Path or General Education courses), the inclusion of courses within the Transfer Path or General Education course database, courses with similar curricular content that fall outside the Transfer Path or General Education database, and other issues pertaining to transfer student success. Appeals may only be submitted regarding transfer issues between SUNY institutions, and do not pertain to non-SUNY public or private institutions.

2) Cross-Registration Resources. This web page contains resources, such as academic calendar dates and billing contact information, to help facilitate the cross-registration of students between SUNY campuses.

3) The Office of Academic Programs, Planning, and Assessment web page. The Office of Academic Programs, Planning, and Assessment coordinates academic program planning across disciplines and award levels at all State University of New York campuses. The office ensures that academic program plans on campuses are consistent with the University's strategic plan, and with University policies and procedures.

    a. List of Campus Reviewers. Campus Reviewers help with all phases of academic program planning. Contact them at program.review@suny.edu or via their personal emails and phones.

    b. Academic program Planning Forms. This web page includes all forms related to academic program review for both new program proposals and revisions to existing programs. Forms also include the Waiver Request Form for Seamless Transfer Requirements.

All inquiries regarding Seamless Transfer, including requests to consider new Transfer Paths or revisions to existing Transfer Paths, can be emailed to StudentMobility@suny.edu.