

## Transfer Degree Issue

When California State Senate Bill (SB) 1440, the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act, was signed into legislation on 29 September 2010, it enabled the California Community Colleges (CCC) and the California State University (CSU) to collaborate in the creation of Associate in Arts for Transfer (AA-T) and Associate in Science for Transfer (AS-T) degree transfer programs. SB 1440 requires community colleges to grant an Associate Degree for Transfer (AD-T) when a student has met specified general education and major preparation requirements for a given degree. The College responded by creating three initial AA-T degrees in psychology, sociology, and communication studies, which were approved by the College Curriculum Committee and subsequently placed on the Board of Trustees Consent Agenda for approval at the 13 April 2011 regular meeting. However, the Board moved these items from the Consent Agenda with resolve to discuss them further at a special Board meeting to be held one week later. Another reason for tabling the item until the special Board meeting was the selection of courses in the psychology AD-T degree.

Around that time, the Campaign for College Opportunity had recently published “Meeting Compliance, but Missing the Mark: A Progress Report on the Implementation of Historic Transfer Reform for Students from Community Colleges to the California State University via Senate Bill 1440.” The report listed the AD-Ts that had been developed or were in progress by each California community college. At the time, Rio Hondo College had developed, or was in the process of developing, five AD-Ts.

At the subsequent special 20 April 2011 board meeting, the Campaign for College Opportunity provided a presentation on SB 1440 and the aforementioned report. The Campaign for College Opportunity representatives provided copies of their report and provided the following recommendations “to overcome the challenges in the creation and adoption of this degree and transfer pathway”:

- Greater accountability
- Firm timelines for implementation
- Sharing information
- Adoption of best practices across institutions

The discussion at this special 20 April 2011 meeting then turned to the psychology degree. Trustees questioned the faculty about course options contained in the degree. A faculty member answered the question as to why he did not accept the recommendations of the Articulation Officer and other Counselors. He explained that the degree will transfer to the California State Universities (CSUs), as the AD-Ts are designed to do, as well as at least to one University of California (UC) campus. The faculty member stated that department faculty members had included the Articulation Officer in the development of the degree and had incorporated some of her recommendations. The discussion continued as to how to ensure the degrees are student-centered and to maximize the flexibility of these degrees for our students. The Board unanimously approved three degrees.

Then, at the 8 June 2011 regular board meeting, the Board considered the AA-T degree in Mathematics. While one Trustee wanted to hold off approving the degree until Board Policy (BP) 4020, "Program and Curriculum Development," was revised, the Board went on to discuss on general terms the Transfer Model Curricula (TMCs), Associate degrees and Associate Degrees for Transfer (AD-Ts), Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC), and the mathematical preparation of Rio Hondo's students. The Board was also reassured that the Articulation Officer was involved in this degree's development. The Board unanimously approved the AA-T in Mathematics.

During subsequent Board meetings, the Vice President of Academic Affairs has reported further progress with respect to development of additional transfer degrees. Concurrently, the Superintendent/President has engaged the campus community to ensure that Rio Hondo College faculty members and administrators collaborate to increase the number of AD-Ts offered at Rio Hondo College. As of April 2014, Rio Hondo College had developed 19 AD-Ts, all but one of which has received final approval by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO).

It must be noted that Administrative Procedure (AP) 4020, "Program and Curriculum Development," clearly states that "[t]he faculty, acting through discipline areas within the academic divisions and through the Curriculum Committee, a sub-committee of the Academic Senate, shall be responsible for program and curriculum development." This responsibility was the point of conflict. Subsequent discussions within the Board, as well as discussions between faculty members and the Board, have included a valid concern that responsibility over academic expertise clearly must rest with discipline faculty. The perception of the faculty was that the Board was "interfering" in academic matters; the perception of the Board was that the faculty was "limiting" choices in the psychology degree. Both the Board and the faculty were required, however, to mutually agree to go forward. The dispute was resolved when the District and the Senate mutually agreed, and the psychology AA-T was approved as presented to the Board.

During subsequent discussion of BP 4020, "Program, Curriculum, and Course Development," remnants of the transfer degree issue resurfaced. This time it focused on the nature of policy versus procedure. The Academic Senate perceived the Board's initial proposed revision to BP 4020 as restrictive and contrary to the Senate's recommendations. At the core of the issue were legitimate concerns over boundaries, responsibilities, and the notion that board policy should consist of broad statements while the accompanying administrative procedures should specify how the policy is to be implemented. These concerns were resolved in a series of discussions between the Academic Senate President, the Superintendent/President, and the Board President, which resulted in the Board's approval of BP 4020 in January 2014.