

New York

Office of Higher Education
New York State Education Department
Joseph P. Frey
Associate Commissioner
Office of Quality Assurance
Education Building Annex
Albany, NY
Email: jfrey@mail.nysed.gov

- 1) Does the state have an identifiable “P-16” effort visible? Who is in charge of this effort?
New York does have an identifiable P-16 effort. The New York State Board of Regents is in charge of it. In New York, all public and registered private elementary and secondary schools, and all public, independent, and proprietary degree-granting institutions are members of The University of the State of New York. As the University’s head, the Board of Regents has statutory responsibility over all of education in the State of New York from pre-kindergarten through college. In November 2006, the Board of Regents approved “P-16 Education: A Plan for Action” which can be found at:
<http://usny.nysed.gov/summit/p-16ed.htm>

The overall goal of the Plan is to close student performance gaps based on income, race, ethnicity, language and disability and to keep up with the growing demand for more knowledge and skills in the face of increasing competition and the changing global economy.

- a) Does the agency include a utility or function on its website designed explicitly to help potential students locate an appropriate college or university to attend?
The State Education Department has a directory of all public, independent, and proprietary higher education institutions in the State on its Web site, with a link to each institution: http://www.highered.nysed.gov/Quality_Assurance/directory/index.html.

In addition, the Department maintains an Inventory of Registered Programs where an individual can find each registered degree, diploma, or certificate program at all 271 colleges and universities in New York State: <http://www.nysed.gov/heds/IRPSL1.html>.

The Department is developing a program, “Planting the Seed,” which is designed to make more students in underserved communities aware of the opportunities in teaching and the licensed professions through a multi-media Web based approach. This program will provide resources for students, parents, teachers and guidance counselors and will give underserved communities access to licensed professions in these areas to assist students in deciding which career they would like to pursue. This Web-based tool will also provide information on New York higher education institutions that offer such programs so that students can be directed to those Web pages and provide specific information on select programs of study.

- 2) Is a mandated or recommended college preparatory curriculum in place in the state's public high schools?

Yes, there is a mandated college preparatory curriculum in all public and registered private high school for a Regents diploma ("high school diploma") set forth in Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. They are a minimum of 22 units of credit, including:

4 units of English;

4 units of social studies;

3 units of science (of which at least one shall be in the life sciences and one shall be in the physical sciences);

3 units of mathematics;

1 unit of visual arts and/or music, dance, or theatre; and

2 units of physical education.

In addition, for a diploma all students must achieve passing scores on the Regents examinations in English language arts, mathematics, U.S. history and government, science, and global history and geography.

There are additional requirements for a Regents diploma with an advanced designation. They include completion of 2 units in a language other than English and passing the Regents examination in that language, passing additional Regents examinations in mathematics, and passing an additional Regents examination in a science (of the total of at least two, at least one must be in a life science and one in a physical science).

- 3) Has the state articulated a set of explicit competencies or skills that define what it means to be "college ready?"

Yes. In 1996, the Board of Regents established 28 Learning Standards across the K-12 curricula designed to ensure that students have appropriate knowledge and skills in order to participate effectively in postsecondary education and the world of work. In addition, they established graduation requirements, including the passage of five Regents examinations, to ensure that students exiting high school in New York State are appropriately prepared to enter higher education. Achieve, Inc.'s April 2007 report, "Closing the Achievement Gap," found that "New York is the only state in which postsecondary institutions find the state's end-of-course high school tests – the Regents Exams – challenging enough to determine whether incoming students are prepared to enroll in credit-bearing courses" (page 17).

It has been ten years since the establishment of these Learning Standards and the Regents have directed the State Education Department to reexamine all the Regents Learning Standards in K-12 to ensure that they:

- Define appropriate knowledge and skills for all students to be competitive in a global economy; and
- Ensure that the Learning Standards are articulated with what is required to complete college level work in our public university systems.

That work is currently under development as we reexamine all the Learning Standards in New York State.

- 4) Are systematic programs in place in the state that encourage students to accelerate progress by taking college-level courses while still enrolled in high school?

The Commissioner's Regulations provide that high schools may arrange with institutions of higher education for courses that provide credit towards a college degree as well as towards a high school diploma. The University of the State of New York includes 271 public, independent, and proprietary institutions of higher education. They include the 64 campuses of the State University of New York (SUNY) and the 19 campuses of The City University of New York (CUNY).

In 2005, SUNY reported that approximately 16,000 students had taken SUNY courses in New York State public high schools in the fall term alone. The City University of New York has a program called College Now where college faculty visit high schools throughout New York City to provide enrichment courses for students in high school. There were approximately 52,000 course registrants in College Now in 2005-06. In 2004-05, 80 percent of the students taking College Now passed college credit courses while in attendance.

In addition, many of our independent colleges offer courses in high schools across New York State. A brochure identifying the independent colleges with programs is available.

- 5) Is there a statewide policy present that governs placement into college-level courses or remedial courses? Is a standard set of placement tests recommended or required? If yes, are common cut scores for placement decisions in place or do institutions get to set their own?

With 271 public, independent, and proprietary degree-granting institutions and varying levels of selectivity among them, there cannot be one simple standard for all to follow. Colleges must assess whether students they are enrolling have the appropriate skills to do credit bearing work in their institution and, if not, provide appropriate remedial instruction to that end.

Part 52 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education requires all degree-granting institutions to identify appropriate admission requirements based upon the content and rigor of their academic programs. Colleges are required to identify the appropriate measures to use to assess a student's ability to undertake college level work and to determine whether they have the capacity to provide the instructional and other support an applicant would need to complete the program. Many of our community colleges use the Accuplacer examination to determine whether students need to be placed in remedial coursework prior to entering credit bearing work. In addition, The City University of New York has specific requirements that a student must follow in order to opt out of remedial coursework including:

- Passage of CUNY's own ACT-developed Freshman Skills Assessment Test; or
- Obtaining a 75 on the Regents English Language Arts and Mathematics Examinations; or

- Obtaining a combined score of 960 of the Math and Verbal SATs.

However, higher education institutions are not required to limit admission to applicants who graduated from high school. They must assure that such students attain the equivalent of a high school diploma before conferring degrees on them. The Rules of the Board of Regents identify several equivalents, including the GED, a letter of equivalency from the local Superintendent of Schools, passing grades on the five Regents Examinations required for a high school diploma, or successfully earning at least 24 semester hours of college credit in defined disciplines as a recognized candidate for a degree.

Legislation enacted in 2007 requires that persons applying for State student financial aid for the first time in 2006-07, who do not hold U.S. high school diplomas, pass a federally approved Ability-to-Benefit test that the Board of Regents has found appropriate for the level of instruction offered (both colleges and certain nondegree occupational schools participate in such State programs) at a pass point approved by the State Education Department, in an independent testing environment as certified by the institution to the Department. While this requirement does not affect admission standards directly, it is anticipated that it will result in colleges adopting similar requirements for admission of applicants who do not hold diplomas from U.S. high schools.

- 6) Is there a visible statewide transfer and articulation policy? Does this cover all institutions or only public institutions? What are the specifics of this policy?

There is no statewide transfer and articulation policy to which institutions are required to adhere. However, articulation is one of the priorities of *The Board of Regents Statewide Plan for Higher Education*:

http://www.highered.nysed.gov/Quality_Assurance/statewideplan/page1.htm.

Under this priority, the Department encourages all institutions to have articulation agreements based on course equivalency that are consistent with their educational missions and that recognize transfer credits fairly and in students' interest, rather than on the basis of the type of institutional accreditation of the sending institution.

The Department registers all degree programs in New York State and determines that all such institutions have courses that are credit worthy. Therefore, it encourages all institutions to accept transfer credits from other New York degree-granting institutions. However, because there is a wide range of selectivity among the different colleges in New York State, it is virtually impossible to guarantee that, in every instance, a student's credits will transfer from one institution to the other, especially if the program the student is transferring into is substantially different. Therefore, institutions and faculty have the power to accept or reject transfer credits from other institutions in New York State.

The State University of New York and The City University of New York do have system-wide transfer policies. Those policies are found on their respective Web sites:

<http://www.suny.edu> and <http://www.cuny.edu>.

In addition, in its capacity as a Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agency, the Board of Regents has accrediting standards that require that institutions the Board accredits (1) not deny transfer credit solely upon the source of accreditation of the sending institution, so long as the sending institution is accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, and (2) offer courses at a level and rigor that warrant acceptance in transfer by other higher education institutions.

- a) Is the transfer/articulation policy accompanied by a statewide transferable general education requirement? Does this name actual courses and/or credits? Are specific competencies identified that the student should meet through this coursework? Is testing used to guarantee student competency for progress or transfer?

The Board of Regents does not mandate “general education” at higher education institutions. Instead, each degree awarded must be a degree that is defined in the Rules of the Board of Regents. Each undergraduate degree has a specific required minimum percentage of liberal arts and sciences courses. For example, a Bachelor of Arts degree requires that at least three-quarters of the courses be in the liberal arts and sciences. A Bachelor of Science degree requires that at least one-half of the courses must be in the liberal arts and sciences. The Department defines “liberal arts and sciences” in guidelines that institutions use in determining whether a course may be counted appropriately towards the required minimum percentage:

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/04/liberalarts.htm>.

The State University of New York has specific “general education” requirements for all undergraduate programs offered by State-operated campuses. Technically, they do not apply to SUNY’s community colleges; however, the requirements of articulation have extended them to the community colleges as well. The City University of New York has more general expectations and leaves greater flexibility to each of its colleges. CUNY does require all students to pass the CUNY Proficiency Examination before earning 60 semester hours in either an associate degree or a baccalaureate program. This is a test of analytical, reading, and writing skills, not of content knowledge. SUNY has no comparable requirement.

- b) More specifically, does an AA or AS degree from a community college in the state meet general education requirements at public four-year institutions? What mechanisms are in place to make sure this actually happens?

The Regents Rules define both the Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree and the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree as requiring that at least three-quarters of the work be in the liberal arts and sciences. Therefore, at least 45 of the minimum of 60 semester hours in an A.A. degree program must be in such subjects, as must 90 of the minimum 120 semester hours in a B.A. program. The Rules define both the Associate in Science (A.S.) and the Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree as having at least one-half of the work in the liberal arts and sciences. Consequently, at least 30 of the minimum 60 semester hours of the work in an A.S. program must be in the liberal arts and sciences, as must at least 60 of the minimum 120 semester hours in a B.S. program. These definitions assure a considerable degree of comparability of content between A.A. and B.A. programs and between A.S. and B.S. programs.

Within those general definitions, institutions have flexibility to develop curricula, so long as the curricula show evidence of careful planning, as required by the Commissioner's Regulations. The State University of New York and The City University of New York, which each have both two and four year institutions, have established policies to ensure that the general education requirements taken in community colleges will transfer to baccalaureate programs at the four year institutions. The independent colleges in New York State do not have one transfer policy for students attending community colleges. Again, it is up to the individual faculty and their determination as to whether the coursework taken is equivalent to coursework that would be offered at the specific institution.

- c) Does credit from transfer courses meet specific course requirements at the transfer institution (e.g. American History counts for American History) or do just the credits transfer to count against the total needed for graduation?

This is not regulated by the State Education Department. Most institutions that would accept an American History course would count it towards American History at their institution, unless such course is being used as an elective in a more generic sense (i.e., Humanities, Social Sciences, etc.).

- 7) Are there statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress toward a degree?

Each individual public, independent, or proprietary college can decide whether it will accept "test-out" or "competency-based provisions." Many institutions do give advanced standing based upon knowledge gained from life or work experience, the college level equivalency program (CLEP), and the AP tests. However, that is an individual college's decision.

- 8) Does the state have an easily-accessible state-supported alternative institution that allows students to complete their degrees more quickly or conveniently than through attendance at a traditional public institution?

New York established the nation's first examining university in 1969, when the Board of Regents created the Regents External Degree Program, which enabled students to present credit from a variety of institutions or even to earn a degree solely by examination. That now is Excelsior College, an independent institution. A number of other institutions in New York State also allow students to use alternate methods. As part of the SUNY system, Empire State College, which is a distance learning institution, allows students to complete a degree program through the convenience of distance learning.

Statewide, 26 public, independent, and proprietary institutions have been determined to have the institutional capacity to offer programs of study by distance education. In addition, they and other New York's public, independent, and proprietary higher education institutions offer more than 700 programs of study via distance education (i.e., at least half of the work in the program is offered by distance education).

- a) Does the state have an accessible central bank or catalog of on-line courses contributed by many institutions that enable students to do “one-stop shopping” for electronic courses?

The Department maintains an electronic directory of all degree-granting institutions in New York State with their Web links so that students can browse and determine appropriate courses. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the Inventory of Registered Programs allows students the ability find distance learning programs in specific areas at our State’s institutions.

- 9) Does the state provide incentives to institutions for improvements in degree production or graduation rates? For minimizing the number of students graduating with excessive numbers of credits (e.g. more than 120 SCH)?

In 2005, 61.5 percent of students entering public, independent, and proprietary four-year colleges six years earlier, statewide, earned baccalaureate degrees from the same institution. Factoring in transfers and longer completion periods, the State Education Department estimates that more than 75 percent of those students eventually earn a degree. In the same year, 23.8 percent of students entering associate degree programs at public, independent, and proprietary colleges three years earlier, statewide, earned associate degrees from the same institution. Factoring in transfers and longer completion periods, the State Education Department estimates that nearly 50 percent of those students eventually earn an associate or baccalaureate degree.

The State program of aid to the independent colleges is an incentive for the institutions to graduate students efficiently because the aid is based upon the number of degrees awarded – an: associate, baccalaureate, master’s or doctoral degree. This aid is commonly referred to as Bundy Aid and is approximately \$42 million a year for independent institutions. There is no comparable aid for the public university systems. The public university systems receive operating aid based upon the number of students in attendance at those institutions. There are currently no programs that would provide incentives for institutions to have more students complete their degree program on time.

- 10) Does the state provide incentives for students who successfully complete their degrees (e.g. tuition rebates or cash bonuses)? For students who complete their programs without amassing additional credits (e.g. within 120 SCH)? Are there financial disincentives for students to take more than the number of credits needed to graduate (e.g. full or out-of-state tuition)?

There are currently no incentives in New York State for students to complete their degree programs on time or within a certain number of credit hours.