

Report of the Commission on Curriculum, Articulation, and Transferability (formerly Music and General Education) - January 22, 2021

The Commission met Friday morning with two members physically present and several members participating virtually. As a first item of business, Commission Chair Robert Hansen reminded those present that a couple of years ago, the association voted to change the name of the commission to focus on the issues of curriculum and articulation driven by the state's emphasis on smooth transferability from 2-year to 4-year institutions. While those issues continued to frame the conversation, the impact of the COVID pandemic and our responses to it permeated the discussion.

We discussed the place of college readiness courses in the curriculum, noting that some institutions, 2- and 4-year alike, offer those courses as part of the core while others do not. There are advantages to both approaches. Institutions that do not give core credit have the opportunity to offer more academic content in the core. However, receiving institutions that do include them as core options must accept them as core 90, potentially causing a transfer student to have excess core 90 hours. The discussion also revealed a disparity in the number of credit hours the preparatory courses carry, with most offering them for one credit, but some for three.

The difficulties created when students bring a large number of dual-credit hours continue to impact music majors negatively. Most concerning is the inability to create a full load of required courses for upper division students, thereby putting federal financial aid at risk. One solution to the problem that has been successful at Stephen F. Austin University has been the creation of minors in music for music majors. That increases the number of required hours in the degree plan, even if the student does not ultimately complete it. Examples of such minors include chamber music, opera, or jazz studies.

The dual credit challenge does not apply exclusively to movement from the community college to the senior institutions. The trend toward allowing high school students to graduate with an Associate's Degree potentially by-passes the community college for music students, but does not reduce the number of semesters needed for them to complete a baccalaureate degree, whether it is undertaken in a senior institution or started in the 2-year college. We recognized these well-meaning initiatives can actually delay the completion of a student's education and do so at considerable additional cost.

As we concluded the conversation, it became clear that assuring student success formed the basis of all the concerns we shared. Going forward, the Commission's deliberations on the articulation of curriculum among and between institutions and the attendant impact on transferability should be responsive to the need to assure student success.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Hansen, Chair