

**Academic Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate, California State University:
Q & A on Proposed Transfer Policy [3.7.04]**

1. Q. What is the problem?

A. Both native and transfer CSU students graduate with more credits than are required to complete their degrees, native students with an average of 141 units and transfer students with an average of 142. These students take up seats that could provide access for new eligible students who now may be denied admission. Initiatives to facilitate native students' progress to degree are being developed or implemented on each CSU campus. Yet a significant issue remains, as *two thirds* of CSU graduates are transfers from the California Community Colleges (CCC). For these students the growing impact of CSU campuses means that they may not be admitted to the campus of their first, or even second, choice. These students need clear information about what courses to take in both general education and their major, especially those courses that will meet major degree requirements regardless of which CSU campus admits them.

2. Q: What is the goal?

A: The goal of both the statewide academic senate and the CSU administration is to provide access to the baccalaureate for a greater number of students. Reducing the number of units taken beyond those needed for the degree is a necessary strategy given budget reductions. Title 5 now requires at least 60 units for upper-division transfer, and the CSU, with few exceptions will no longer accept lower-division transfer students. Transfer students who enter the CSU with 60+ units *applicable to their degree program* will take fewer units beyond those needed for the degree

3. Q: If transfer students accrue excess units when they graduate, did the extra units come from students' actions and behaviors at the CCC or CSU?

A. Both (according to reports of the chancellor's office study of thousands of transcripts). Transfer students take an average of 76 units after transfer, but part of the reason for the high number of units is to make up for units taken at the CCC that do not count toward the degree.

4. Q. What are possible actions the CSU can take in response to the problem of excess units accrued by transfer students?

A. Two possible responses are dual admission or a systemwide core/campus specific pattern of for each major.

5. Q. Will dual admission address the problem?

A. Dual admission would likely address the problem and may be the preferable solution, but it has been attempted in the past and was not supported by the CCC. The CCC faculty leadership continues to oppose dual admissions. In addition, dual admissions can apply only to students who were CSU-eligible at high school graduation and will not affect the significant number of transfer students who establish their eligibility for transfer based on their work in community college.

6. Q. What are the components of the systemwide core/campus specific pattern and why is it thought to be workable?

A. The pattern includes:

1. Students must complete 60 units before transfer.
2. Students should declare a major as soon as possible and no later than the point of application to the CSU. This will help to ensure that units students take will count toward their CSU degree and that students receiving financial aid will still be eligible for the aid for the most semesters after transfer.
3. The 60 transferable units may include the required 39 units of lower-division general education and at least 6 units of coursework applicable to the major (which may be prerequisites to the major). For high-unit or high-preparation programs, such as those in business, science, engineering, nursing (and some other programs), students may need to focus more on prerequisites and delay some general education courses until arrival at the CSU campus. For majors without lower-division courses or prerequisites, the pattern of coursework should reflect that required of native students so as not to disadvantage transfer students.

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4. Students must commit to a specific CSU campus *and will be given the highest admission priority* in order to take additional units applicable to the degree program at the specific CSU campus.
5. The systemwide core/campus specific approach facilitates transfer through a 45-unit common pattern, by major, of general education and major or major prerequisite courses while retaining flexibility for local campuses to maintain a unique campus identity for their degree programs through the remaining transferable units and, of course, the required upper-division courses in the major degree program.

7. Q. What would be some of the complications in implementing such a plan?

A. Complications include:

1. The success of any program to facilitate progress to degree depends on effective communication and, especially, timely and accurate advising.
2. The 45/15 pattern does not take into account the relationship among "excess" units, minimum coursework requirements for financial aid, and lack of available courses applicable to the degree program. (The federal government requires that Financial Aid Offices monitor a student's time to degree, GPA, and yearly units completed in determining aid eligibility. Each college or university sets its own requirements within some set federal guidelines. For units to degree, schools are allowed to use 150% of the units required for a degree and must use attempted units (rather than completed units). For example, if a degree takes 200 quarter units to complete, a financial aid student is allowed to take 300 quarter attempted units before losing eligibility for aid. This unit count has to include ALL college work - even units that do not transfer toward the student's degree.)
3. Community colleges may not offer some of the necessary courses.
4. A small number of students may game the system by taking majors with lesser requirements, then changing majors upon arrival at the CSU.
5. Program costs may rise for the CSU with a decline in larger enrollment, lower division general education and prerequisite courses as students take more upper-division courses which are more expensive to staff.
6. The timing of major declaration and transfer application and admission may not allow students to know the final 15 units required for priority admission at a given campus. For early declaration, would majors be affected differentially by a requirement for major declaration by the end of the freshman year? (Students may select majors such as communication, anthropology only after taking a general education course in that area.)
7. How will CSU units taken through self-support rather than state support be counted?
8. Will there be any effect on the use of advanced placement?
9. Will this lead to upper-division CSU courses in the major being designated for CCCs to teach in the lower division with approval of a lower division course "covering" the same material?

8. Q. To what extent would the systemwide core/campus specific pattern reduce the number of excess units taken at the CCCs by transfer students?

A. The pattern would presumably reduce difficulties in advising for CCC students and counselors caused by campus variation in requirements for lower-division major and major prerequisite courses and would encourage focused, purposeful student behavior by offering preferential admission status.

9. Q. How will we know if the pattern has made a difference?

A. The CSU will track and compare progress to degree to see if a substantial number of transfer students graduate with fewer units.