

California public colleges collaborate on fix to broken transfer process

By Alexei Koseff
akoseff@sacbee.com

Published: Monday, Apr. 14, 2014

More than 50 years ago, California's revered Master for Higher Education established public community colleges as a means to educate the state's lower-division students and prepare them for transfer to a higher institution.

Today, the sprawling system of 112 colleges and more than 2.1 million students transfers only about 40 percent of those seeking to continue on to a university where they can finish a bachelor's degree, according to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

The poor transfer rate stems in part from a conundrum of varying requirements and confusing pathways between schools that finally resulted in a 2010 bill, SB 1440, creating the Associate Degree for Transfer. The two-year degree guarantees admission into the California State University system as a junior and sets students up to complete their studies in four years – an increasing challenge at CSU campuses where high enrollment creates heavy demand for mandatory classes.

Both the community college system and CSU have embraced the new associate degree as an opportunity to fix the broken transfer process. But despite progress in implementing the degree program over the past few years, many challenges remain – most notably, actually getting students to participate.

For Joshua Miller, who expects to complete his bachelor's in psychology at California State University, Sacramento, this semester, the new transfer initiative has worked well.

Miller attended Sierra College in Rocklin for three years, working on transfer requirements and an associate degree, so he was able to complete an Associate Degree for Transfer in psychology when it first became available in the 2011-12 academic year.

The transfer degree gave his community college experience “more weight,” Miller said, allowing him to enter the competitive psychology program at Sacramento State as a junior and secure a spot in popular classes such as cross-cultural psychology, a required course for the major.

“That set me miles ahead from everyone else” who transferred with him, Miller said. He is on track to graduate in two years, as SB 1440 intends, having conducted research with his abnormal-psychology professor and developed an interest in continuing his studies at the graduate level.

The transfer degree is “a small thing if you don’t put the context to it,” he said, “but it really set the stage for me to finish at Sacramento State smoothly.”

There are not many like Miller, however – at least, not yet. Only in its third year of existence, the Associate Degree for Transfer has produced modest results so far.

In 2012-13, community colleges granted 5,365 transfer degrees, equivalent to more than 10 percent of the students who transferred to CSU that year, according to California Community Colleges Vice Chancellor Erik Skinner.

Eric Forbes, assistant vice chancellor of academic affairs at CSU, said the university system has enrolled about 1,100 students so far who have transferred with an Associate Degree for Transfer. At this point, the University of California is not participating in a statewide transfer program.

A recent report from the Public Policy Institute of California showed that student awareness remains limited: More than one-third of student leaders surveyed had not heard of the Associate Degree for Transfer and they predicted their peers knew even less, though nearly half of respondents were interested in the program.

“There’s a whole cultural shift,” said Colleen Moore, a higher-education researcher at Sacramento State who authored the PPIC report. “It’s been hard for colleges to figure out ... when for a particular student this would be the best option.”

“But it has definitely gained momentum,” she added.

The Legislature passed SB 1440 in fall 2010 at the urging of advocates who argued that the transfer process no longer adequately served students: Because of differing requirements at each individual school, a community college student might take dozens more units than necessary before transferring and still have to repeat courses at the university level.

With a focus on transferring, many students also never completed an associate degree at the community level, leaving them with nothing to show for their work if they didn’t finish their bachelor’s – a real concern at CSU, where the graduation rate for transfers is 71.6 percent.

While some faculty initially resisted the idea of legislating degrees, the two systems have since come together to establish 1,147 degree pathways from community colleges to CSU campuses, with another 540 in the pipeline.

The pathways are based on model curricula for what are so far the 25 most popular majors among transfers, including sociology, business administration and math. Students complete 60 units at a community including general education requirements, electives and some fundamental courses in an area of interest, then finish 60 units of upper-division work in a CSU program deemed “similar” to the associate degree.

Faculty from both systems jointly developed the model curricula, trying to standardize what was expected of students to fully prepare them for CSU while still allowing some flexibility at the campus level.

“It was a little bit of mixing oil and water together,” said Beth Smith, president of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, who took part in curriculum planning meetings.

Adapting to the model curricula has also required concessions. CSU campuses must figure out how to balance SB 1440’s strict unit provision with additional graduation requirements they may have, such as a language class or American Institutions, the systemwide U.S. history and civics sequence.

San Jose State University, for example, has already cut down the unit load in some of its most demanding majors, such as engineering fields, in anticipation of model curricula still to be developed.

“That’s the tricky part of it,” said Steve Branz, associate dean for curriculum at State. “Our degree program has to figure out which units are least essential and you don’t have to take those.”

Conversations like those perhaps explain why compliance has been a mixed success so far.

Almost all the 23 CSU campuses have recognized at least one pathway between each available Associate Degree for Transfer and the similar major they offer – but many of those majors have multiple concentrations, of which most are still not accessible to transfers.

“You’re so limited to where you can start as a junior,” said Michele Siqueiros, executive director of Campaign for College Opportunity.

The organization, which sponsored SB 1440, has been encouraging schools to expand their offerings so that transfers have “as many options as a native freshman.” Siqueiros points to the example of CSU Long Beach, which has deemed almost every concentration in the 25 majors “similar” to an Associate Degree for Transfer, providing transfer students with 47 degree options.

Implementation has been mixed across the community college system, which is divided into 72 local districts that have more individual control over their operations. Expected to develop a transfer degree equivalent for every associate degree they offer, about 54 schools have more than 10 in place so far.

Many only have a handful. While some of those are small, rural colleges that may have not enough students in a given program to make developing an additional degree worthwhile, the Los Angeles Community College District, which serves more students than any other in the state, averages four transfer degrees across its nine schools.

Skinner, the community college vice chancellor, is optimistic that the system will have full compliance by fall 2015.

“This has been an issue California has been grappling with for 30 years, and we’ve largely managed to crack the nut,” he said. “Our vision is that the Associate Degree for Transfer will become the default pathway” for students transferring to CSU.

To make that vision a reality, the systems have jointly asked Gov. Jerry Brown for \$5 million this year to launch a more aggressive marketing campaign for the transfer degree, aimed not just at community campuses but also at high school students weighing their options.

“If it doesn’t pay off the way we initially expected, it just means there’s more work we need to do,” Ken O’Donnell, senior director of student engagement at CSU, said of the transfer degree. “It doesn’t mean this wasn’t the right step.”

Hudley-Hayes' academic degrees raise questions
LA Times,
By Howard Blume
March 21, 2014, 8:55 p.m.

Genethia Hudley-Hayes is a contender to return to the Los Angeles Board of Education seat she formerly held and can claim many accomplishments. But an MBA that can't be verified has magnified other resume problems, including an inaccurate description of an honorary doctorate.

These issues have become fodder for an opponent, undermining a long record of public service.

On her resume, Hudley-Hayes lists an MBA with emphasis on nonprofit management from a joint program of San Jose State and the Los Angeles-based Center for Nonprofit Management.

She said she no longer has documentation, but insists that she completed the course work and received a degree in 1976.

"I believed all was in order," Hudley-Hayes said, because "no questions were ever asked regarding the degree."

"I don't claim to be a Rhodes scholar, or have degrees from prestigious university or colleges," she said. "I am simply presenting a resume that reflects my schooling. If indeed that derails a candidate's campaign where there is a mountain of evidence to attest to my ability to serve, it will be a sad day indeed."

The management center says it did not exist until 1979, that it has never offered an MBA and has no record of a relationship with San Jose State. In the late 1980s, the center began offering certificates, which lack the standing of a degree, for completing courses.

The center could not locate records for Hudley-Hayes, although it has no documentation from 1979 to 1985, Chief Executive Regina Birdsell said.

San Jose State has been offering MBAs since at least 1969, but could find no record of one with an emphasis on nonprofit management. Nor could it find a record of Hudley-Hayes as a student. The university checked files and microfilm as well as graduation and diploma books.

"She may have gotten something but it probably wasn't from us," said spokeswoman Pat Lopes Harris, noting that the college has tried to maintain careful records of official degrees.

Last month, the Hudley-Hayes' campaign had characterized inaccurate statements about a doctorate as a typo.

In past resumes, Hudley-Hayes failed to note that the doctorate was honorary rather than earned. And she identified the school as Washington, D.C.-based American University, rather than American World University, which critics have described as a diploma mill.

In recent exchanges, Hudley-Hayes explained that a colleague in academia nominated her for the honorary degree while she was on the Board of Education.

At the time, one potential benefit to American World University was an association with a prominent elected official.

After her board service, Hudley-Hayes, 68, worked frequently as a consultant. For some period, the misidentified doctorate was listed as a credential supporting her qualifications. It surfaced as recently as 2010, when Hudley-Hayes became an appointed trustee over Compton Community College. And also after her appointment as a city fire commissioner.

The doctorate hasn't appeared on recent resumes, said her campaign consultant, Parke Skelton.

Academic credentials can have particular import in a school board race.

"It's much more than [inaccurately] saying you were past president of the homeowners association because it relates to the job," said Bob Stern, past president of the Los Angeles-based Center for Governmental Studies.

In a board election, he added, it can be "hard to distinguish between the candidates, so something like this will be amplified."

The issues with the resume were investigated by the campaign of rival Alex Johnson, which first challenged Hudley-Hayes' resume.

Johnson consultant Roy Behr also offered evidence that Hudley-Hayes overstated her status as a professional mediator and a past association with a state commission.

The Hudley-Hayes campaign made the first public disclosure, accusing Behr of trying to force Hudley-Hayes out of the race.

Much of Hudley-Hayes' career has unfolded in public view: She headed a local civil rights organization, became president of the Board of Education, headed the city Fire Commission and served as an appointed trustee for the Compton Community College District. And she holds a master's degree in education from Pepperdine University.

A number of community leaders have risen to her defense, suggesting that the matter could have a negative effect on Johnson's campaign.

"Hudley-Hayes has a long and honorable track record of dedicated public service and is a staunch and experienced education advocate for the LAUSD's undeserved students," community activist Earl Ofari Hutchinson said in a statement with several signatories. "To have her name and reputation sullied for cheap and dirty political one-upmanship does nothing to advance the fight of educational excellence."

In 2006, the discovery of inaccurate education credentials played a key role in a school board race. Candidate Christopher Arellano had yet to complete a master's degree that he had claimed.

Arellano's campaign collapsed because of this and other revelations, including past troubles with law enforcement.

Some Colleges Try to Catch Students Up Before They're Behind

April 8, 2014

By Sara Lipka

Washington

Community colleges contend with a difficult reality: Many students show up unready for college-level work, and few of them catch up and graduate. To shift that status quo, as campuses around the country introduce new models of remedial, or developmental, education, some are trying to reduce the need for it.

The American Association of Community Colleges set a bold goal at its annual meeting here this week: to decrease by half the number of students who come to college unprepared. In presentations on Sunday and Monday, administrators and faculty members shared ideas for how to do that, describing new partnerships with local school districts to offer the colleges' remedial courses to high-school students. Catch them up, the thinking goes, before they're behind.

William Penn Senior High School needs that kind of intervention, presenters from Harrisburg Area Community College said here. The college's York campus, in south central Pennsylvania, sees more students from nearby William Penn than almost anywhere else. Ninety-two percent place into remedial reading, and 100 percent into remedial mathematics.

"These kids are scoring in the lowest developmental levels that we have," Marjorie A. Mattis, the campus dean, told an audience of educators from Kansas, Montana, Oregon, and Texas. "How long can we sit back and see these types of results and not do anything about it?"

Conversations with the superintendent produced a plan. Last year on a pilot basis and this year for all seniors at William Penn, English and math follow the college's developmental curriculum.

Students take placement tests at the end of their junior year, and in the fall they report to a "HACC hallway," painted in the college's colors, with classroom tables instead of desks. Teachers must meet the criteria for instructors at the college, which at least one already is. Summer sessions familiarize them with the college's textbooks, syllabi, and method of assignment review, and during the year the teachers work with college-faculty liaisons.

At the end of the pilot year, tests—offered on the York campus, so students might take them more seriously—showed significant improvement. In English 37 percent of students placed one level higher than they had initially, and in math 39 percent did.

“We’re not going to say that we have every student college-ready, but we’re going to have them more ready than when we started,” said Ms. Mattis. If fewer students place into the lowest levels of developmental education, she said, that’s progress. In general, said William Penn’s principal, the program has more students thinking about college.

Plans to Scale Up

Anne Arundel Community College, in eastern Maryland, is pursuing a similar strategy in math. With a grant from the League for Innovation in the Community College, Anne Arundel and its county’s public-school system compared their curricula and opted to offer a pair of the college’s developmental-math courses in two high schools.

Starting last academic year, seniors shifted to a model called Math First, an abbreviation for “focused individualized resources to support student success with technology.” The computer-based approach involves mastery testing, in which students retake tests until they score at least 70, said Alycia Marshall, a professor and interim chair of mathematics at Anne Arundel, describing the program during a session here.

Of 134 seniors last spring, 107 passed both of the developmental courses, she said. And of those students, 34 enrolled at Anne Arundel and registered for a credit-level math course, which is often a stumbling block for students coming out of remediation. But 30 of them passed.

College and school officials may soon bring the model to other high schools, said Ms. Marshall. “We’re excited about scaling this up,” she said, “because of the success rates.”

This year New Jersey’s 19 community colleges are studying numerous interventions to prepare local high-school students for college-level work. Burlington County College plans to help adapt high-school courses, while other institutions are experimenting with software and summer boot camps.

Such approaches require close, continuous collaboration between colleges and school districts: “the end of the finger pointing,” Patricia C. Donohue, president of Mercer County Community College, said after a presentation. “By partnering with schools,” she said, “we’re trying to be part of the solution.”

Why academic credentials matter

LOS ANGELES WAVE

By Melina Abdullah, Tyrone Howard and Sharoni Little

APRIL 10, 2014

Los Angeles Unified school board candidate Genethia Hudley-Hayes recently was accused of falsifying academic credentials on her resume in her quest to fill the seat vacated after member Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte died in December. The seriousness of these allegations cannot be overstated, particularly in a race for school board in the district where the majority of Los Angeles' black students attend public school.

There are four issues that make allegations of false academic credentials alarming in this case: 1) This is a race for school board — the foundational governing academic system — and any candidate with a falsified academic record is severely compromised and in an extremely untenable situation. 2) At a time when the credentials of school teachers and administrators must be above reproach, electing a school board member who may have lied about her own record epitomizes hypocrisy. 3) The District 1 representative would serve as the only black voice on the school board, representing not only their district constituents, but also the interest of black students and families throughout the district. 4) To elect a board member whose ethics are in such serious question can convey a bad message about community expectations for our elected representatives and our valuing of public education.

Unfortunately, it has become common practice for some political candidates seeking elected office to fudge credentials in an attempt to impress voters with various types of experiences and educational qualifications that suit them for a given office. However, when the candidate is running for school board, arguably the most influential elected entity involved in the management and oversight of schools, allegations of dishonesty suggests more than the usual political game-playing, signaling instead, a lack of ethics that makes it difficult to make demands of the students that we seek to educate.

We demand academic honesty of our students and have measures in place that guard against dishonesty. How can we expect the students in LAUSD to work toward accomplishing educational goals if adults at the very highest level in charge of guiding, leading, and teaching them allegedly have not? How can we demand that they carry themselves with integrity and behave honestly and ethically if those who make the policies and shape the system allegedly have not risen to these same standards?

How might this play in relation to school personnel? We required not only degree completion, but also a series of credentials from our teachers and administrators in order

for them to hold their professional posts. We value their degrees and credentials because of the rigor required to complete them as well as the subject material that an individual must master to be successful in their academic program.

How might any given school board member demand credentials from accredited institutions for the more than 2,000 school administrators and more than 26,000 teachers in the district, when that school board member allegedly misrepresents his or her own. Falsifying administrative or teacher credentials would result in serious and justified punitive actions, such as immediate suspension, removal from the classroom, demotion or outright termination. Is it not a contradiction, then, to elect a representative who has allegedly falsified his or her own record?

Finally, let us not neglect the critical role that the District 1 member plays. An elected member serves not only as the representative of their district's constituents, but as de facto representative for black educational interests. For all intents and purposes, the election of someone whose ethics are being challenged signals a lack of commitment to excellence on the part of our community.

Many have criticized the board for educational ineffectiveness and fiscal inefficiency regarding what is best for its students. It is time to change that narrative and demand and expect excellence from our representatives. That excellence includes all candidates having relevant professional experience, an unyielding commitment to the students and families of LAUSD, unquestionable integrity, high degrees of transparency and the ability to model the types of behavior we would want students to emulate.

During a time of increasing accountability for students, teachers, administrators and parents, we believe that it is only fair that our leaders be held accountable as well. For the sake of transparency, we assert that all candidates should be required to disclose all of the pertinent professional experiences and educational accomplishments they believe qualify them to be elected members of the LAUSD Board of Education.

Academic credentials matter in a school board race because they send a powerful message to students that the individuals representing them have done the very things that they are expecting of them as students. To elect any person who does not exemplify the highest character denigrates the legacy of our community's demand for quality public education and our long struggle for educational equity and justice.

The purpose of our speaking out is not to assault Genethia Hudley-Hayes or any candidate accused of falsifying academic credentials. Yes, we are credentialed professors, but more importantly, we are parents raising children ages 6-17, some of whom attend our public schools in this district. Our duty as educators, and more importantly as parents,

is to demand excellence, honesty and integrity, and to speak up when we believe cherished values are made to bow to professional convenience and kneel to political aspiration.