Streamlining Curriculum Processes in the California Community College System

Executive Summary

The streamlining of curriculum processes constitutes the intersection of a number of key initiatives and projects currently in progress in the California Community College system. Some projects have been in response to the needs of the field by the Chancellor's Office, such as the development of the new Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory (COCI). Other efforts have been in response to legislation focused on statewide initiatives such as the Online Education Initiative, the Student Success Taskforce, and Strong Workforce Program, including clarification of the processes for regional consortia and regional curriculum projects. Additional efforts have been undertaken through the work of the California Community College Curriculum Committee (5C), formerly known as the System Advisory Committee on Curriculum (SACC), including the delineation of authority and the movement toward local Curriculum Chair/Chief Instructional Officer certification.

A work group was convened during Fall 2016 to examine existing curriculum processes and suggest options for streamlining these processes. This work group was comprised of representatives from the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, Chief Executive Officers, Chief Instructional Officers, college curriculum specialists, and the Chancellor's Office (Academic Affairs, Finance and Facilities, Legal, Student Support Services and Special Programs, and Workforce and Economic Development). The work group reviewed the history of the curriculum approval process within the California Community College system, laws and regulations impacting the curriculum approval process, financial issues surrounding curriculum and its approval, issues impacting student services and curriculum, and finally, potential unintended consequences.

The most significant factors for an examination and streamlining of curriculum processes in the California Community College system include:

1. Interest in increasing local control of the curriculum approval process.

2. Requests for more efficient curriculum approval process from the Chancellor's Office, including the Board of Governors Strong Workforce Task Force Recommendation #8, which states:

> "Evaluate, revise and resource the local, regional, and statewide CTE curriculum approval process to ensure timely, responsive, and streamlined curriculum approval."

3. Shifting roles of authority for the Chancellor's Office for curriculum review and approval.

This paper provides the field with information on roles and authority, as well as impacts of improved curriculum technology and possible changes to California Code of Regulations, title 5, with the goals of streamlining and improving curriculum approval processes so that colleges may deliver courses and programs that meet student needs, transfer requirements, and labor market demand as efficiently as possible. As curriculum processes are streamlined, there will be new responsibilities for Chief Instructional Officers and Curriculum Chairs, new roles and opportunities for the Chancellor's Office Academic Affairs Division, and new technology to support all new roles and opportunities. However, curriculum will still be required to be submitted to the Chancellor's Office.

Greater Local Control of the Curriculum Approval

History of Curriculum Review and Legislation

Pursuant to Education Code, section 70901, the Board of Governors has the general authority to review and approve all educational programs offered by community college districts and all courses that are not offered as part of an educational program approved by the Board of Governors. Additionally, the Board has the ability to transfer such approval authority to the governing board of each community college district.

Furthermore, in accordance with California Education Code, section 70902, the governing board of each community college district shall establish policies for the approval of, and approve, courses and educational programs. Once approved by the local governing board, new educational programs shall be submitted to the Board of Governors for approval. Courses that are not offered in approved educational programs shall be submitted to the Board of Governors for approval. The governing board shall establish policies for the approval of, and approve, individual courses that are offered in approved educational programs, without referral to the Board of Governors.

Traditionally, the curriculum process involved up to three steps. First, curriculum was developed locally by faculty, vetted through a college and/or district curriculum committee, and then approved by the local governing board. If the program was in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) field, the program also went through a review at the regional consortium. Once approved locally, curriculum was forwarded to the Chancellor's Office for

review and approval. Within the streamlining project, authority at these three touch points is defined in statute as follows:

Legal Authority Involving Local Curriculum Approval

With the passage of AB 1725 (Vasconcellos, 1988), oversight of local curriculum rests with the local academic senate and, by extension, with faculty. It is faculty's responsibility to ensure that curriculum is timely, pedagogically sound, and responsive to the needs of students, the colleges, and the workforce. At the local level, approval of curriculum is the responsibility of the Academic Senate or a subcommittee of the Academic Senate, which would include the curriculum committee or other group comprised primarily of faculty, which has been designated as the approving body.

Desire for greater local control of the curriculum approval processes arose during the years of local approval of stand-alone courses, which expired on January 1, 2014. Following the sunsetting of that legislation, the System Advisory Committee on Curriculum (SACC, now known as California Community Colleges Curriculum Committee or 5C) requested a review of courses that had been submitted to the Chancellor's Office prior to the expiration of local control. Those submissions were found to be relatively error free, prompting SACC to request that local approval of stand-alone courses be reinstated. Local approval of stand-alone courses was approved by the Board of Governors at its July 2016 meeting.

During discussions in 5C, local approval of other types of courses, in addition to stand-alone credit courses, was deemed possible following the submission of a completed certification form by the Chief Instructional Officer and the Curriculum Chair. The areas covered by the certification include:

1. Stand-alone credit courses;

2. Substantial changes to existing credit courses;

3. Nonsubstantial changes to existing credit courses; and

4. The addition of new credit courses to an existing program.

These certifications went into effect at the end of the 2016 calendar year. As a result, the processes for these courses is to go through local processes as usual, then submit the courses through the Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory (COCI) for a control number. Once the COCI is fully integrated, the control numbers for these courses will be generated automatically upon submission to the Chancellor's Office.

Current Concerns Regarding Curriculum Approval Processes at the Local College

Faculty, working within their organizational structure, do not have an efficient method to submit curriculum for state approval. The following local factors were discussed:

- Lack of training at the local level for college curriculum specialists (and sometimes the lack of a curriculum specialist at all at the local college);

- Lack of training for curriculum chairs, as well as turnover of curriculum chairs and lack of release time at the local college;

- Varying local curriculum timelines;

- Varying local curriculum procedures such as curriculum submissions to local Boards of Trustees; and

- Concerns that the current process does not keep courses and programs up to the ever-changing industry standards.

Current Concerns Regarding Curriculum Approval Processes at the Chancellor's Office

The curriculum proposal queue at the Chancellor's Office has grown significantly, such that it is no longer tenable. Factors contributing to this situation include:

- The new volume of programs in the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADTs) initiative following the passage of SB 1440 (Padilla, 2010) and SB 440 (Padilla, 2013);

- Shift in Chancellor's Office priorities in response to several new mandated initiatives that did not include additional staffing or other resources to support them. Staffing these mandated initiatives, including but not limited to the Baccalaureate Degree (Block, SB 850), Inmate Education (Hancock, SB 1391) and Military Credit (Block, AB 2462), depleted the availability of existing staffing resources from working on the curriculum queue;

- The inundation of the curriculum queue with new courses due to the changes in the repeatability guidelines; and

- Lack of software bridging between the Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory and local curriculum management systems.

Recommendations

➢ **Enhanced Responsibilities for the Chief Instructional Officer/ Curriculum Chair.** The shift to local approval provides an opportunity for some curriculum to be certified by the Curriculum Chair and the Chief Instructional Officer. The streamlined course approval process based on enhanced local responsibility and approval creates a larger

role and increased responsibilities for college Chief Instructional Officers, Curriculum Chairs, and local curriculum committees.

When the Chief Instructional Officer and Curriculum Chair of a college certify the four types of curriculum above , they are ensuring the following:

- The college/district has followed the Program and Course Approval Handbook processes and that course and program information is accurate;

- The college/district has followed the CCCCO Course Unit Calculation guidelines and course hours and units are correct;

- The college's/district's governing board has approved the course outline of record and/or program requirements;

- The college/district has provided training regarding curriculum laws, regulations, and policies to ensure compliance; and

- The college/district has developed a local policy, regulation, or procedure specifying the accepted relationship between contact hours, outside-of-class hours, and credit for calculating credit hours to ensure consistency in awarding units of credit.

Additionally, Chief Instructional Officers have responsibility for managing local curriculum inventories to ensure that all courses and programs have gone through appropriate approval processes, notifying student services colleagues of curricular changes, coordinating the local curriculum inventory with financial aid to ensure that the Participation Program Agreement (PPA) is up to date and accurate, and notifying the appropriate accrediting agencies of new programs.

The Credit Course Certification Form provides information to implement an expedited process for all credit course proposals. The form will be due to the Chancellor's Office by October 1 annually.

➢ **Changes to California Education Code and California Code of Regulations, title 5.** Language pertaining to curriculum approval was discussed with the Chancellor's Office Academic Affairs and Legal Divisions as well as 5C. Further progress regarding these discussions will be forthcoming.

➢ **Forthcoming technology improvements.** For the past year, the Academic Affairs Division has been working with representatives of the ASCCC, CIOs, and the Butte Technology Center to develop a more efficient technology, the Chancellor's Office

Curriculum Inventory (COCI), to house the curriculum inventory for the 113 community colleges.

The COCI project objectives:

- To be more intuitive than the current inventory system and will incorporate rule sets, based on the Data Element Dictionary, to ensure data quality;

- Auto-generation of control numbers for courses (not for programs because this is still the purview of the Chancellor's Office); and

- The potential that COCI could be linked to C-ID and ASSIST next generation.

NOTE: COCI is not currently set up for model curriculum/portability; it is not a repository for all curriculum in the system to be shared.

> **Boards of Trustees Responsibilities.** Title 5 recognizes that approval of curriculum falls under the direction of the local boards of trustees. However, authority over curriculum belongs to the academic senates and, by extension, to the faculty. Boards encourage development of curriculum by using timely processes to approve new courses and programs and by recognizing the primacy of faculty in the development of curriculum in all areas of the college.

Request for the Improvement of Streamlining Curriculum Approval Processes from Statewide Initiatives

The desire to produce curriculum and improve curriculum approval processes has been a part of many California Initiatives. The Student Success Task Force, the Online Education Initiative, Open Educational Resources, Associate Degrees for Transfer, Baccalaureate Degree Pilot Programs, Basic Skills Initiatives, Inmate Education Pilot Programs, College and Career Access Pathways, and the Strong Workforce initiative have all had curricular processes and responses as part of their plans for student success. The California Community Colleges play an important role in boosting our state's economy by serving more than 2.6 million students a year. One out of four community college students in the U.S. is enrolled in a California Community College, making it the nation's largest system of higher education.

Recently, the Strong Workforce Task Force focused on several areas of curricular practices, including priority/emergent sectors and industry clusters; effective practices to scale; integration and leverage of programming between funding streams; promotion of common

metrics for student success; and removal of structural barriers to completion. Local, regional, and state curriculum processes must be responsive to these recommendations.

Conversations around the state including faculty, administrators, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the divisions of Academic Affairs and Workforce and Economic Development at the Chancellor's Office industry leaders, and sector navigators, have identified six specific recommendations that pertain to California Community College curriculum:

- Evaluate, strengthen, and revise the curriculum development process to ensure alignment from education to employment;

- Evaluate, revise, and resource the local, regional, and statewide CTE curriculum approval process to ensure timely, responsive, and streamlined curriculum approval;

- Improve program review, evaluation, and revision processes to ensure program relevance to students, business, and industry as reflected in labor market data;

- Facilitate curricular portability across institutions;

- Develop, identify, and disseminate effective CTE practices; and

- Clarify practices and address issues of course repetition for CTE courses when course content evolves to meet changes in skill requirements.

Legal Authority Involving Regional Consortia

California Code of Regulations, title 5, section 55130(b)(8)(E) provides the regional consortia with the power to recommend Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs based on labor market need and other factors. The community colleges in California are organized into 15 economic regions, grouped into seven macro regions. Each macro region has a CTE consortia of CTE faculty and administrators from community colleges in the region, along with community partners. The CTE Regional Consortia provide leadership for colleges to:

- Integrate and coordinate economic development with CTE programs and services;

- Develop and coordinate staff development; and

- Increase the knowledge of programs and services in the region and to disseminate best practices;

It is important to note that the role of the regional consortia in the curriculum process is different from the role the regional consortia plays in aligning expenditures related to the Strong Workforce Program. If colleges choose to use Strong Workforce Program monies, they must align their work with the regional goals, and the regional consortium's role is to ensure that these funds are spent appropriately.

Current Concerns Regarding Curriculum Processes at the Regional Consortia Level

The regional consortia have in many cases taken on a role beyond those specified out in California Code of Regulations, title 5, section 55130.(b)(8)(E) Some concerns that were discussed include:

- Opening of programs to examine individual pieces of curriculum, rather than the program as a whole;

- Providing "approval" for programs, as opposed to the California Code of Regulations, title 5 language of "recommendations", which caused confusion in the field;

- Taking long periods of time to recommend programs (often due to the issues above);

- Varying local curriculum timelines;

- Varying local curriculum procedures such as curriculum submissions to local Board of Trustees; and

- The current process does not keep courses and programs up to the ever-changing industry standards.

Recommendations

Changes in Regional Consortia Recommendation Processes.

Before CTE programs can be submitted to the Chancellor's Office, they must be reviewed by the regional consortia. These reviews are to include labor market information and information about similar programs at nearby colleges only, but often require two or more readings.

Timelines and content of these requirements varied significantly from one regional consortium to another. During Fall 2016, many regional consortia tightened their review procedures and utilized electronic measures in an effort to speed up regional consortium review procedures. As these efforts continue, it is expected that the role of the regional consortia will continue to be more streamlined and more uniform.

Shifting Roles of Authority in Curriculum Processes at the Chancellor's Office

Legal Authority Involving Chancellor's Office Curriculum Approval

Legislative requirements outlining the Chancellor's Office role in curriculum approval include the following:

1. Review and approve all educational programs (70901(b)(10));

2. Review and approve all courses that are not program-related (70902(b)(2));

3. Establish policies for courses of instruction and educational programs (70902(b)(2));

4. Review and approve courses of instruction and educational programs (70902(b)(2));

5. Review and approve program courses (70902(b)(2)).

As streamlining efforts evolve, so will the role of the Chancellor's Office. With local authority shifting to the college district, the Chancellor's Office will develop in-depth training and technical assistance through webinars and in-person trainings. The Chancellor's Office will also chapter each curricular item to assure that all credit courses and programs have a unique control number and are chaptered in COCI. The unique control number (for each course and program) is used to assign the appropriate values for the student record through MIS Data Elements. As a state agency, the Chancellor's Office will continue to shape curriculum related policy and conduct periodic reviews to ensure compliance. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Audit Manual will also be updated to reflect the new role of the Chancellor's Office in conducting periodic reviews to ensure compliance.

This will be a significant change to the infrastructure of the curriculum approval processes and there will be a period of adjustment. To establish the new infrastructure for these revised curriculum approval processes and to provide the appropriate support for local processes, there will be changes to California Code of Regulations, title 5 language, trainings, convenings, and workshops. Additionally, there are plans to develop revised processes for the approval of noncredit and Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADTs).

Recommendations

The streamlining effort is a systemwide collaboration that will take significant time, energy, and patience to appropriately facilitate the lifecycle of curriculum. Currently, the recommendations are as follows:

➢ Develop a process for local approval
➢ Develop a process for regional recommendation
➢ Develop a new process for state chaptering

Effective Practices for Local Curriculum Approval

Suggestions for Effective Practices

- Curriculum goes to the Board of Trustees every meeting;

- Succession planning for Curriculum Chairs–consider a Vice Chair for the committee;

- Overlap between out-going Curriculum Specialist and incoming Curriculum Specialist so that transfer of knowledge occurs;

- Develop local processes that works to ensure continuity at your college;

- Curriculum Chair should receive significant reassigned time; and

- Provide curriculum training opportunities.

Practices to be addressed

- Noncredit programs and courses need local certification; California Code of Regulations and title 5 changes will need to come through 5C.

- New programs will still need to go through the Chancellor's Office for approval.

- More dialogue needs to occur between the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and California State University Chancellor's Office regarding the review and approval of new and revised ADTs.

- Create a mechanism for curriculum portability.

- Resolve curriculum proposals with issues in the Curriculum Inventory System.

- COCI add notifications to CIO, Curriculum Chairs, and others so that all will be apprised of status.

- External Factors: Streamlined substantive process at the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC); C-ID approval of courses that are part of an ADT; articulation; additional approvals for CTE programs (e.g. FAA for aviation); catalog use by external institutions; keeping external partners in the loop for curriculum development (e.g. employers); best practices regarding catalog/addendum production; keeping external accrediting requirements in mind.

Conclusion

The three areas discussed in this paper will lead to more streamlined and efficient curriculum approval processes, both locally and statewide.

These changes will mean greater administrative responsibility and Chief Instructional/ Educational Officers will need to be cognizant of their roles and responsibilities regarding the following:

- Certification processes create greater accountability locally, specifically with Curriculum Chairs and CIOs;

- Audit capabilities should be leveraged to include pieces of curriculum;

- Effective practice points to standing curriculum items at each governing board meeting, with appropriate training for boards and guidelines for trustees;

- Reassigned time for Curriculum Chairs (data with small/medium/large colleges); and

- Integration of local curriculum inventory management systems with local student services processes.

Appendix: California Code of Regulations, title 5, section 55130

California Code of Regulations, title 5, section 55130 Approval of Credit Programs

(a) Before offering any credit course as part of an educational program at a college, the governing board of a district shall obtain approval of the educational program from the Chancellor in accordance with the provisions of this article. Approval shall be requested on forms provided by the Chancellor.

(b) The application for approval shall contain at least the following:

(1) The name of the proposed program.

(2) The description of the proposed program.

(3) A list of required courses to be included in the program.

(4) Course outlines of records for all courses in the program.

(5) The purposes and specific objectives of the proposed program.

(6) The place of the proposed program in the district master plan.

(7) An explanation of how the program is appropriate to the objectives and conditions of higher education and community college education in California and how it conforms to statewide master planning.

(8) The need for the proposed program ascertained with regard to at least the following factors:

(A) Other community colleges in the area currently offering the program;

(B) Other programs closely related to the proposed program offered by the college;

(C) Relation of the proposed program to job market analysis, where applicable;

(D) Enrollment projection for the proposed program;

(E) Recommendations of career technical education regional consortia, when applicable; and

(F) The classification of the courses in the program in accordance with section 55001.

(9) The need for and present adequacy of the following resources shall be determined in relation to the proposed program:

(A) Library and media center resources;

(B) Facilities and equipment required to initiate and sustain the program. If a new facility is to be used, reference should be made to the five-year master plan.

(C) Availability of adequate or proposed financial support; and

(D) Availability of faculty.

(c) The development, establishment and evaluation of an education program shall include representative faculty involvement.

(d) An approval is effective until the program or implementation of the program is discontinued or modified in any substantial way. The Chancellor may evaluate an educational program, after its approval, on the basis of factors listed in this section. If on the basis of such an evaluation the Chancellor determines that an educational program should no longer be

offered, the Chancellor may terminate the approval and determine the effective date of termination.

(e) In multicollege districts, program approval is granted for a specific college.

Additionally, Education Code places the responsibility of conducting and reviewing a job market study of the labor market area for new CTE programs with the local governing board of the community college. The authority to establish these programs also lies with the local governing board:

California Education Code, section 78015

(a)(1) The governing board of a community college district, prior to establishing a vocational or occupational training program, shall conduct a job market study of the labor market area, as those terms are defined in Section 52301.5, in which it proposes to establish the program. The study shall use the State-Local Cooperative Labor Market Information Program established in Section 10533 of the Unemployment Insurance Code, or if this program is not available in the labor market area, other available sources of labor market information.   The study shall include a California Occupational Information System supply analysis of existing vocational and occupational education or training programs for adults maintained by high schools, community colleges, and private postsecondary schools in the area to ensure that the anticipated employment demand for students in the proposed programs justifies the establishment of the proposed courses of instruction.

(2) The governing board of the community college district shall make copies of each job market study available to the public.

(b) Subsequent to completing the study required by this section and prior to establishing the program, the governing board of the community college district shall determine whether or not the study justifies the proposed vocational education program.

(c) If the governing board of the community college district determines that the job market study justifies the initiation of the proposed program, it shall determine, by resolution, whether the program shall be offered through the district's own facilities or through a contract with an approved private postsecondary school pursuant to Section 8092.