



State University of New York

Memorandum to Presidents

Date: August 14, 1987

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From: Office of the Vice Chancellor for
Academic Programs, Policy and Planning

Subject: Summary of Academic Policy Issues

To: Presidents, State University of New York

With changes in campus personnel and regulations, it seems useful, from time to time, to pull together information concerning a variety of academic policy issues about which questions are raised by campus officers, students, auditors, and other agencies. Accordingly, this Memorandum, which supersedes Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 80, No. 13, dated October 1, 1980, is intended to provide a summary of the most recent policies, laws, and regulations which govern the academic aspects of campus life. If not properly addressed in campus policies and publications, these academic issues can be the source of action in law or by regulatory bodies, citation by accrediting agencies, public criticism or, at the least, complaints and misunderstandings.

The small number of questions, comments, and complaints which we receive centrally out of the possible universe of such items is testimony to the fact that campus officials are well-acquainted with the business of managing a SUNY campus and are organized to comply with requirements. This Memorandum is intended only to serve as a helpful checklist and guide to relevant policy statements.

If you have any questions related to these matters, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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Vice Chancellor for Academic
Programs, Policy and Planning

This memorandum addressed to:

Presidents, State-operated Campuses
Presidents, Community Colleges
Deans, Statutory Colleges

Copies for information sent to:

President Coll
Vice Provost Nesheim

Program Registration

Every curriculum creditable toward a degree, leading to licensure in a profession, or leading to a certificate or diploma must be registered with the Commissioner of Education before a campus may publicize its availability or recruit or enroll students. In addition to inviting action from the State Education Department as it enforces this regulation, failure to comply may affect the use of scholarships and other financial aid programs. Only those programs which are registered according to required procedures should be listed in any campus catalog.

Any course offered for credit must be part of a registered curriculum as a general education course, a major requirement, or an elective.

Program Initiation, Revision, and Elimination

Campuses establish new programs and deactivate or discontinue existing programs according to procedures outlined in Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 87, No. 7, "Revised Procedures for Submission of Academic Program Proposals," and Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 83, No. 11, "Procedures for Deactivation and/or Discontinuance of Academic Programs."

Curricula and Courses

Commissioner's Regulations Section 52.2 (c) requires that, in addition to being registered, each curriculum and its courses must be well-defined in writing, with course descriptions clearly stating the subject matter and requirements of each course. The college catalog is the best place for such descriptions and this catalog should be current and up-to-date. Each campus must make certain that courses in each curriculum are offered with sufficient frequency to enable students to complete their programs within the minimum time for completion for that degree level. Credit earned at the undergraduate level must be for "college-level work" and at the graduate level for work designed expressly for graduate students. Enrollment of undergraduate students in graduate courses and of graduate students in undergraduate courses should be strictly controlled. Academic policies which are applicable to each course, including its learning objectives and methods of assessing student achievement, must be made explicit by the instructor at the beginning of each term.

Where minors are required within a baccalaureate degree curriculum, conditions for fulfilling such requirements should be specified. Ordinarily, such a minor should consist of 18 to 24 semester hours of credit.

Credit by Evaluation

Campuses should make known to students the policy for award of academic credit by various forms of evaluation as governed by the policy outlined in Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 76, No. 11, "Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation." This covers use of published examinations and other demonstrations of proficiency and the application of transfer policies to credit earned by such means.

Developmental/Remedial Courses

In Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 85, No. 11, "University Guidelines on Developmental/Remedial Courses," it was indicated that campus faculty are responsible for determining which courses should be designated as remedial/developmental and, therefore, offered without credit. These courses are to be identified in the college catalog, along with the conditions under which they may be required, and this listing reviewed periodically.

Two Degrees at the Same Level

A campus policy regarding the awarding of two degrees at the same level should be established in accordance with Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 86, No. 2, "Restatement of Guidelines on Awarding of Two Degrees at the Same Level."

Off-Campus Instruction

Commissioner's Regulations Sections 50.1 (q), (r), (s), and (t) and 54.1-3 govern instruction offered at locations other than the principal center of an institution or another degree-granting institution. If a complete program is to be conducted at an off-campus site, that site is to be designated a branch campus, which must be approved through a Master Plan amendment. If no complete program is offered but more than 15 credit-bearing courses are conducted or there are more than 350 credit-course registrations in any academic year, an off-campus location is regarded as an extension center and must be approved by the State University and the State Education Department. An extension site, an off-campus instructional location with a lower level of activity, does not require external approval. All courses offered for credit at an extension site or extension center must be part of the registered curricula at the campus's principal center or branch campus, and current records for such off-campus activity must be maintained. Actions for approval of extension centers should be initiated through the Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs, Policy and Planning following the form and procedures outlined in the State Education Department memorandum to Chief Executive Officers Number 80-16 of September 19, 1980. Actions for establishment of branch campuses should be discussed with the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs, Policy and Planning.

Cross Registration

The cross registration arrangements which a campus makes with another campus must be authorized annually by the Chancellor, in accordance with Memorandum to Presidents Vol. 73, No. 42, dated August 23, 1973. A request for authorization containing a list of campuses with which cross registration arrangements will be made, estimates of the number of students to be involved, and a report on the previous year's cross registration activity is to be submitted to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs, Policy and Planning by September 1.

Program Review

In the interest of emphasizing the assurance of high program quality, the State University some time ago instituted a requirement for periodic review of undergraduate academic programs. The basic principles of such a review are outlined in Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 77, No. 3, "Request for Procedures for the Review of Academic Programs," and the procedures to be followed were most recently restated in Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 85, No. 18, "Undergraduate Academic Program Reviews." A statement of campus procedures for implementing the review requirement, the schedule to be followed, and brief summaries of the completed program reviews are to be filed with the Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs, Policy and Planning and updated as appropriate.

Admissions

Students should be admitted through an orderly process using published criteria which must be uniformly applied. Admissions policy should take into consideration the past performance, previous educational experience and other achievements of students (the Commissioner's Regulations use the word "capacity") in determining their ability to undertake a course of study and the ability of the campus to provide the instructional and other support necessary for a student to complete the program. Probably the best approach in all of this is the "truth-in-advertising" concept and the interest of the potential student should be kept in mind in the admission process.

Students, as consumers of educational services, are entitled to a fair investment return when they accept an offer of admission. Therefore, each campus should attempt to supply in advance to all prospective students accurate information on the subjects which are useful in making a decision to attend that institution. (See Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 80, No. 9, "Advertising Guidelines for State-operated Campuses.") According to Commissioner's Regulations, Section 53.2, students at an institution and persons who have contacted the institution for the purpose of enrolling shall receive or have made available to them in the form of a catalog or bulletin the information described below under "The Campus Catalog."

Record Keeping and Advisement

Every campus must maintain for each student a permanent, complete, accurate, and up-to-date transcript of student achievement at the campus. This document is the official cumulative record of the student's academic achievement, and copies should be made available at the student's request, in accordance with State University policies, or to agencies or individuals authorized by law to receive such records in accordance with provisions of the Buckley Amendment. (See Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 85, No. 8, "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974: An Update.") In addition, an accurate record should also be maintained on any financial aid which is granted to a student.

Although each student has the personal responsibility to be aware of degree requirements in the program undertaken and to know what requirements yet need completion at each stage of progression through the program, it is also the responsibility of the campus to assist the student in this knowledge. The Registrar's Office, or such other location as may be designated by the campus president, should keep on hand and make available to students a record of their progress and remaining requirements. Campus procedures in this regard should assure that students receive effective guidance as to what requirements are necessary to complete specified programs and be periodically advised by qualified individuals as to their progress toward completion of programs, and that the records of their progress be available in a timely fashion to assure completion in normal time limits.

Satisfactory Academic Progress and Program Pursuit

Each campus is to adhere to the University-wide standards for satisfactory academic progress and program pursuit adopted by the State University Board of Trustees and approved by the Commissioner of Education in determining student eligibility for State financial aid awards. These standards should be published in the catalog and other appropriate publications along with statements relating these standards to the campus academic standards for probation and dismissal. (See Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 81, No. 7, "Implementation of SED Academic Progress and Program Pursuit Regulations for State Student Financial Assistance.")

Each campus should establish a policy describing satisfactory academic progress and program pursuit for persons eligible for financial aid through the State Supplemental Tuition Assistance Program (STAP). This policy should be published in the catalog and/or other appropriate publications.

It is expected that each campus will have formulated and published standards for academic progress and program pursuit for general application on the campus, and these will serve as the standards for federal student financial aid programs.

Counseling

Each campus must provide academic advice to students through faculty or appropriately qualified persons who should be thoroughly familiar with institutional policy and procedures and be available to students on a regular and convenient basis. An effective academic counseling system can enable a student to find a bond to the institution, a bond often forged in the personal relationship between a student and faculty member through the advising process. Non-academic counseling services should also be available to students to deal with the variety of emotional and developmental problems that affect them. However, no campus is expected to allocate resources to deal with major emotional problems of students on a continuing basis.

The Campus Catalog

The campus catalog is a public statement of programs available, the policies and procedures of the campus educational endeavor, the educational background of the faculty and staff, and the expected conditions of the campus learning and living environment, among other information. In recent years the catalog has sometimes been interpreted in the courts as establishing contractual obligations to students which a campus must fulfill. Information to be provided to both enrolled and prospective students, as listed in the Commissioner's Regulations, Section 53.3, is as follows:

- Financial assistance available to students, including state, federal, and local institutional programs
- Costs of attending the institution, including tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, and other living expenses
- The refund policy of the institution
- The instructional programs of the institution, including degree, certificate, and diploma programs. Included in this description must be a list of the degree, certificate, and diploma programs provided, which must be consistent with the inventory of registered degree and certificate programs maintained by the State Education Department. This list must contain the official program title, degree, and HEGIS code number, and is to be preceded by a statement that enrollment in other than registered or otherwise approved programs may jeopardize a student's eligibility for certain student aid awards. In addition, each degree, certificate, or diploma program must be described in terms of both prerequisites and requirements for completion, and the academic year in which each course offering is expected to be taught is to be indicated.
- Program-related facilities. This includes a general description of instructional, laboratory, and other facilities directly related to the academic program, in addition to general information describing the total physical plant. Narrative and/or statistical information must be provided about library collections and facilities, student unions, and institution-operated eating places. The hours of operation, including holiday and vacation schedules, must be provided.
- Faculty and other instructional personnel. Regular resident faculty must be listed by rank, with the highest degree held by the faculty member and the institution by which such degree was granted, and department or major program area to which such member is assigned. An estimated number of adjunct faculty and teaching assistants in each department or major program area is also to be provided.

- Student retention. Information on student retention and graduation rates for at least full-time undergraduates is to be provided based on a summary of the most recent cohort survival statistics available to the institution.
- Placement of graduates. This information includes summaries of job placement and graduate school placement statistics compiled by the institution, when available.

In addition, according to Commissioner's Regulations Section 52.2 (e) (3) (iii), policies regarding the following matters relating to students should be published and most institutions find it convenient to include these items in their catalogs:

- requirements for admission to the institution and to specific curricula
- requirements for residence
- graduation requirements
- awarding of credit, degrees, or other credentials
- grading
- standards of progress
- payment of fees of any nature
- refunds
- withdrawals
- standards of conduct
- disciplinary measures, and
- procedures for redress of grievances.

Information in the catalog should be current and care should be taken to avoid misleading and ambiguous assertions. In cases where the same catalog is used for several years in a row, entering students who are affected by changes in campus policy not yet included in the official catalog should be specifically informed of these matters at the time of admission so that they will not be misled by an outdated catalog. In no case should a catalog promise what cannot be fulfilled. It is suggested that a statement be included in the catalog to the effect that provisions in the catalog may be changed during the course of the year. The name and address or telephone number of the office where current information can be obtained should be provided.

If separate catalogs or bulletins are published for separate programs or schools, only the information outlined above which applies to that program or school need be included, but there should be a statement that separate catalogs are being used.

Advertisements, brochures, or solicitations to prospective students should call their attention to the catalog as the source of extensive information.

Campus Instructional Calendar

Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 81, No. 3, "Guidelines for Development of the Campus Instructional Calendar," provides an outline of policy in this area, which is based primarily upon two considerations. Commissioner's

Regulations, Section 50.1 (o) requires that there generally be 15 hours of 50 minutes each of instruction for each semester hour of credit. Education Law, Section 224-a, deals with accommodating religious holidays within the academic calendar. On this latter point, while there is no requirement that classes be suspended on religious holidays, it is essential that campuses be sensitive to differences in religious practices. For instance, it has been noted that a number of campuses hold commencement on Saturday, a day of the week when members of some religious groups are forbidden to participate in such activities.

Faculty-Student Relationships

Consistent with the vigorous defense of academic freedom, faculty should be alerted to the hazards of appearing to deal with students in a capricious manner in the academic relationship.