Further Standards for the Associate Degree

Review

In order to earn an ordinary associate degree, the student has to:

- Complete at least 60 degree-applicable units total.
- Complete at least 18 degree-applicable units within a major or area of emphasis.
- Complete at least 18 degree-applicable units of general education coursework (as further specified in Title 5 55063).
- Demonstrate competence in reading and written expression (Freshman Composition), and in mathematics (Intermediate Algebra).
- Complete a transfer-level course of at least 3 units in Ethnic Studies (effective Fall 2024).

So we couldn't approve a degree that did not require at least this much from the student.

However, even if a proposed degree requires this much from the student, that does not automatically mean we should approve it.

What else do we need to see?

The Five Development Criteria

There are five "development criteria" that the state chancellor's office uses to decide whether to approve curriculum.

These criteria, "were derived from statute, regulation, intersegmental agreements, guidelines provided by transfer institutions and industry, recommendations of accrediting institutions, and the standards of good practice established in the field of curriculum design. These criteria have been endorsed by the community college system as an integral part of the best practice for curriculum development" (24) [all page references are to the 7th edition of the PCAH].

If a proposed degree also satisfies the five development criteria, then it makes sense for us to approve it.

The Five Development Criteria

The five criteria are:

1. Appropriateness to Mission
2. **Need**
3. Curriculum Standards
4. **Adequate Resources**
5. Compliance

Let's go through each in turn, paying particularly close attention to 2 and 4.

Appropriateness to Mission

The proposed degree should fit, "with the mission of the community colleges as defined by the Legislature in Education Code 66010.4," and with the, "mission statement and master plan of the college and district" (25).

To fit with the mission of the community college system, proposed curriculum must:
- "[B]e directed at the appropriate level for community colleges; that is, it must not be directed at a level beyond the associate degree or the first two years of college [unless your college has explicitly been approved to offer baccalaureate degrees]" (25).
- "Address a valid transfer, occupational, basic skills, civic education, or lifelong learning purpose. It must not be primarily avocational [i.e., for hobbyists] or recreational" (25).

To fit with the the mission of our college and district, proposed curriculum has to align with our priorities as a college and district.

Need

There should be a need within our region for the proposed degree (25).

How need is established depends on what the purpose of the degree is.

PCAH allows for degrees that are focused on neither transfer prep nor workforce prep, but on some other, "community need."

But let's just focus on degrees meant for transfer or workforce prep.

Need - Transfer Preparation

"For baccalaureate preparation curriculum, need is presumed to exist if there is student demand for a program…and its transfer applicability…has been documented" (26).

So, in this case, there is a need for the proposed degree when:
- There are a sufficient number of students who would want to complete the degree; *and*
- The degree's "transfer applicability…has been documented."

What does, "transfer applicability…has been documented" mean?

Need - Transfer Preparation

"If a local associate degree is designed to provide transfer preparation, the proposal must demonstrate through the narrative and required documentation that required courses in the program **substantially satisfy** the lower division coursework requirements for the corresponding baccalaureate major or concentration" (86, my emphasis).

- The required courses in a proposed degree might not substantially satisfy the lower-division major requirements at *all* potential transfer destinations.
- But they should substantially satisfy the lower-division major requirements for at least some likely transfer destinations.

Need - Transfer Preparation

So the need criterion is met when:
- There are a sufficient number of students who would want to complete the degree; *and*
- Completing the degree will "substantially satisfy" the student's lower-division major requirements at their transfer destination, for at least some likely transfer destinations.

What counts as "substantially satisfy" is open to interpretation. But the intent is that the student should not have to do a lot more lower-division coursework after transfer.

Need - Workforce Preparation

"For…Career Technical Education (CTE) programs…need for the program must be documented by supplying current labor market information (LMI) within the local service area of the individual college and/or a recent employer survey…a current job market analysis, or other comparable information, must show that **jobs are available for program completers** within the local service area of the individual college and/or that **job enhancement or promotion** justifies the proposed curriculum" (26, my emphasis).

- Completing the degree should be enough to get the student a liveable-wage job, or promotion.
  - There should not be further knowledge, skills, or credentials required.
- The degree shouldn't require more than is necessary.
  - What about a student who completed everything in the proposed degree except for the GE, and any extra electives needed for 60 units total? If they would be just as well placed on the job market, perhaps the proposed degree should really be a certificate.

Need - Workforce Preparation

A degree meant for workforce preparation has to be submitted with (84):

- Current labor market information and analysis
- Industry advisory committee recommendation
- Regional Consortia recommendation (BACCC, in our case).

The ultimate purpose of submitting these things is to demonstrate need.

Curriculum Standards

This section is about how the chancellor's office will not approve a proposed degree unless it has been through the proper approval process and has all of the right documentation.

But it also points out that part of the reason they require all those steps is to ensure that any proposed degree is, "designed so that successful completion of the program requirements will enable students to fulfill the program goals and objectives" (27).

So we should check for this. Will *any way* of completing the degree requirements lead to the desired outcomes?

Adequate Resources

"The college must demonstrate that it has the resources to realistically maintain the program…at the the level of quality described in the proposal. This includes funding for faculty compensation, facilities and equipment, and library or learning resources. Additionally, the college must demonstrate that faculty are available to sustain the proposed required course(s) and to facilitate student success. **The college must commit to offering all required courses for the program at least once every two years**, unless the program goals and rationale for the particular program justify or support a longer time frame as being in the best interests of students" (27-28, my emphasis).

Compliance

"The design of the program…may not be in conflict with any state or federal laws, statutes or regulations" (28).

Summing Up

The five development criteria are:

1. Appropriateness to Mission
2. **Need**
3. Curriculum Standards
4. **Adequate Resources**
5. Compliance

If a proposed degree meets all the basic standards for the associate degree, and satisfies these five criteria, then it makes sense for us to approve it. If not, then it doesn't.