

FCCCC President's Address
CCC Board of Trustee's Meeting
Thursday, December 1st, 2011

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Chairman Cabrera, Chancellor Hyman, members of the Board, Officers of the District, faculty, staff and all others present, good morning.

The semester is almost completed for the students; faculty now begin the mad sprint to the finish and their completion of grading and advisement. On that note, what I want to discuss today is another aspect of completion, the completion of the GECC packet, its inclusion in our performance funding metrics, and new draft recommendations from the Committee on Measures of Student Success Issues.

This fall semester, many of us, faculty and administrators, have participated in the compiling of appropriate indicators to assess our performance as an institution, affectionately known as the KPIs. One indicator we've suggested for the Baccalaureate/Transfer category is completion of the GECC packet.

What is the GECC and why might we want to use it? The GECC, an acronym for the General Education Core Curriculum, is a group of general education courses approved by the Illinois Articulation Initiatives discipline panels whose members come from both two year and four year institutions. IAI imprimatur is in two parts: individual courses are approved by the panels and, once approved, become part of the GECC packet. In the IAI compact, four year institutions in Illinois that are designated as receiving institutions accept all of the courses in the packet for transfer.

What the imprimatur means is that we have prepared students to transfer to the four year institutions, and, if the four year institution accepts the student, the institution accepts the general education coursework. No exceptions: the student completes the packet, the student transfers the packet.

In theory, this is a great idea. The articulation initiative was designed to make the transfer of general education courses much easier for students and affiliate institutions. Indeed, students who want to transfer to a four year university and know their receiving institution can plan their community college coursework efficiently and can avoid extraneous course work that might be required for the AA or AS but not required from the receiving university. Completion of two semesters of language is a good example: City Colleges requires this for graduation, but many four year institutions do not. A diversity requirement for graduation would be another example. It is not a required part of the GECC packet, although there are general education courses with Non-Western or diverse categories in the pool of possible IAI designations.

Moreover, because the courses are approved based on a descriptor to descriptor alignment and not course to course, that is, courses match up according to, for instance, the description and course objectives, and *not* student learning outcomes, a distinction about which the panel members are emphatic, multiple City College courses can have the same IAI number and transfer as the same course. This allows curriculum flexibility but can also result in administrative confusion. Another challenge is that, for courses to be included in the GECC packet, they need IAI approval, and the discipline panels have recently been rejecting a number of courses for a variety of reasons. Finally, as an institution, it is not clear that we've overseen this process very well, and there seem to be courses that could have the IAI approval that don't have that designation.

Let me be clear. IAI imprimatur does not cover all curricula. Courses can transfer as electives to four year institutions without this stamp of transferability, but only as individual course to course matches with institution to institution agreements; these matches are systematized through the form 13s. Thus, a course may transfer to a four year institution and not be an IAI approved General Education course. For instance, only the fourth semester of a language counts as a General Education course, and that designation is currently under review by the humanities panel. This lack of uniformity can result in a messy course audit by the receiving institution. And colleges and universities outside of Illinois are not necessarily members of the compact, an issue that has arisen with some online institutions. And I haven't even begun to address courses designated as fields or major courses, or the so-called tier 2 courses such as criminal justice and computer science.

Why then is the GECC completion an important success measure? It is complex and confusing, and I'm not sure as an institution we understand the complexities of the curriculum issues. But the completion of the packet of thirty-two credits of General Education Core Curriculum means that the receiving institution must accept the thirty-two credits without individually auditing the transcript; it means that we have prepared the student to transfer to a four year institution in Illinois whether or not she does transfer; it means that the student has completed thirty-two credits toward the BA or BS period full-stop. And we can be at the forefront of community colleges on these metrics if we address some of the challenges that I've outlined above.

Indeed, the Illinois Community College Board has begun to explore the GECC completion credential as a completion metric for all community colleges across the state; they see this as a better indicator of successful performance by a two-year institution than graduation rates because it captures students who want the BA or BS as their degree goal. And four-year institutions have also begun talking about awarding an AA or AS retroactively after students have transferred to fulfill the IPEDS graduation demand.

But even the metrics for IPEDS may be changing. In the draft report of November 15th, 2011 from the Committee on Measures of Student Success Issues, charged with reviewing the IPEDS metrics, the committee recommends that: "the Department (of Education) broaden student progression and completion measures in IPEDS by collecting data that could be used to calculate

a graduation rate that includes an unduplicated count of students who completed their program, *transferred, or were substantially prepared for transfer; transfer-out rates that include students who transfer after earning an award* (an award such as the GECC completion) *and measures that take into account other transfer outcomes*. The Committee also recommends that the Department take actions to increase the availability of data on students' postsecondary enrollment and success across states." (p. 19, my italics, accessed November 30th, 2011). And to that last point, the committee is recommending money be allocated for collection of this data.

I want to close with an anecdote, and, although I know anecdotes aren't dashboards, they can further illuminate what we do. About eight years ago, I was reading world literature in a tutorial with a very bright and capable student. As faculty do, I asked her about her long term plans; she said that she wanted to transfer to Smith College, an elite Eastern women's college. The choice of Smith was so unexpected and, to my mind, unusual that I was, as the Brits say, gobsmacked. But I helped the student with her application, and she was admitted with money. But that's not the end of the story. About a year after she transferred, I received a letter from the admissions officer at Smith College; she thanked me for sending this outstanding student (her words) and asked me to send more. And she established yearly recruitment visits to Wright College because they were so impressed with our students. I'd say that is a pretty good performance indicator.

Respectfully submitted,

Polly Hoover

President of FC4