October 12, 1978

TO:        Community College Trustees  
           Via Community College Superintendents/Chancellors

FROM:  Ronald Myron, Executive Director

RE:       BOARD OF GOVERNORS
           CREDIT/NONCREDIT DEFINITIONS

Although this project has been withdrawn from the BGCCC October 26/27 Agenda, it will probably be on the BGCCC November, 1978 Agenda for discussion and possible action.

The significance of this matter warrants your review and reaction.

The BGCCC Educational Policy Committee is studying this issue and will make a recommendation to the BGCCC.

RM/I/s

Attachments

Enc. 6
6.1
11/9/78
Title: Credit/Noncredit Course Definitions as Published in the Education Code and Administrative Code

Staff presentation: Allan Petersen
Program Evaluation and Approval
John Meyer, Specialist

Summary

I. Background

The meaning of the term "credit course" is drawn in this item from regulation and law. A "credit course" is defined as one which is either:

1) a requisite for the awarding of an associate degree.
2) determined to be of collegiate level and is part of a course of study leading to an associate degree, or an occupational certificate, or both.
3) recognized by an appropriately accredited college or university as part of the required or elective preparation for a degree.

Any course not within these categories is defined as a non-credit course.

II. Discussion

Over time, and for a variety of reasons discussed herein, colleges have developed and are offering courses for credit which, strictly speaking, should more appropriately be offered on a noncredit basis. This situation is aggravated by recent legislation which limits state "apportionment" to certain kinds of noncredit classes.

III. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board recognize the appropriateness of colleges offering course services to meet the specific educational needs of their clienteles.

It is further recommended that the Board seek legislative recognition of this function through an appropriate funding mechanism.
Background

Regulations which have guided the Chancellor's Office course and program review and approval procedures were adopted in 1971. These regulations stipulated a "college credit course" meet the following requirements:

51103. College Credit Course. A "college credit course" is a course given in a Community College which meets one or more of the following requirements:
(a) The course is part of an approved educational program.
(b) The credit awarded by the Community College for completion of the course is accepted as completion of a portion of an appropriate educational sequence leading to an associate degree or baccalaureate degree by one or more of the following:
(1) The University of California
(2) A California State College
(3) An Accredited independent college or university.

Regulations outlining the characteristics of a graded course were adopted in 1971 as follows:

55000. Definitions. For the purposes of this chapter, the following definitions shall apply:
(a) It provides credit toward an associate degree, is normally considered of collegiate level, and is approved by the board as a component of, a prerequisite to, or eligible as required or elective course within a course of study which leads toward an associate degree.
(b) It is approved by the board and is part of an occupational course of study beyond high school level within the scope of the term "vocational and technical fields leading to employment," as the term is used in Education Code Section 66701 which leads toward an associate degree, an occupational certificate, or both.
(c) It is approved by the board and is recognized upon transfer by the University of California, a California state college, or an accredited independent college or university in California, as a part of:
(1) The required preparation toward a major;
(2) The general, or general education, requirement; or
(3) The permissible or recommended elective credits.

55002. Standards. A graded course shall meet all of the following standards:
(a) The content is organized to meet the requirements for the associate degree as specified in Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 91600) of Division 2 of this part or the requirements for an occupational certificate and is a part of a course of study not exceeding 70 units in length.
(b) It is offered as described in the college catalog, or a supplement thereto, which provides an appropriate title, number, and accurate description of course content. A course outline is available at the college. Course requirements and credit awarded are consistent with Education Code Section 66701.
(c) Only those students who have met the prerequisites for the course are enrolled.
(d) It is subject to the published standards of matriculation, attendance, and achievement of the college.

(e) The enrollees are awarded marks or grades on the basis of methods of evaluation set forth by the college and are subject to the standards of retention set forth in Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 51300) of Division 2 of this part or to such additional standards as may be established by the governing board of the district.

(f) Enrollment cannot be repeated except in unusual circumstances and with the prior written permission from the district superintendent or his authorized representative or representatives.

These regulations define "college credit courses" by relating the courses to their role in fulfilling degree requirements. Regulations adopted in 1975 stipulated associate in arts degree requirements in the following manner:

51623. Associate in Arts Degree. The governing board of a Community College district shall confer the degree of associate in arts upon a student who in grades 13 and 14 has satisfactorily completed from 60 to 64 semester hours of work in a curriculum which the district accepts toward the degree (as shown by its catalog) and which includes all of the following minimum requirements, provided that 12 hours of the required credit hours were secured in residence at that Community College:

(a) 18 semester units of study taken in a discipline or from related disciplines as listed in the Community Colleges "Classification of Instructional Disciplines."

(b) 15 semester units of general education which shall include at least one course in each of the following areas:

(1) Natural sciences. Those courses of study which deal with matter and energy and their interrelations and transformations (e.g., chemistry, physics, biology).

(2) Social sciences. The body of knowledge which relates to man as a member of society or component of society, such as the state, family, or any systematized human institution (e.g., economics, political science, sociology).

(3) Humanities. Those courses of study having primarily a cultural character (e.g., languages, literature, philosophy, fine arts).

(4) Learning skills, courses, such as oral and written communication, logic, mathematics, and statistics, designed to facilitate acquisition and utilization of knowledge in natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

Students taking these courses may elect to use them to satisfy partially the general education requirements for a baccalaureate degree at the California State Colleges in accordance with the provisions of Section 40405 of this title.

(c) Ethnic studies courses shall be offered in one or more of the areas listed in subdivision (b).

The community college may determine which courses satisfy the requirements of this subdivision.
The governing board may make exceptions to the residence requirement in any instance in which it determines that an injustice or hardship would otherwise be placed upon an individual student.

Legislative concerns resulted in 1977 law embodying similar concepts in the education code:

78201.5 (a) For the purposes of this article, a credit course is a course which is either:

(1) A requisite for the awarding of an associate degree.

(2) Determined to be of college level and is approved by the board of governors as part of a course of study leading toward an associate degree or is part of an occupational program beyond the high school level leading to an associate degree or occupational certificate or both and is taught by a credentialed instructor.

(3) Recognized by the University of California, the California State University and Colleges, or an accredited independent college or university in California as part of the required or elective preparation toward a major degree or as part of a general education requirement, and is subject to the published standards for matriculation, attendance, and achievement of the university, college, or system.

(b) Any course not within subdivision (a) is, for the purposes of this article, a noncredit course and shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 78400) of this part.

Discussion

Clearly, Education Code Section 78201.5 (b) groups all courses not specifically meeting degree requirements in associate or baccalaureate programs or meeting occupational certificate objectives into a noncredit category prior to the enactment of Education Code Section 78201.5, Title 5 regulations performed a quite similar function. In each case, the credit worthiness of any course is dependent upon its role in the degree pattern. As noted in Title 5, Section 51623, cited above, local colleges determine which courses satisfy the requirements of the associate degree, provided that all course content must be at the 13th and 14th grade level.

In the meantime, colleges have been confronted by a persistent demand from a "new clientele" of students for service and for help in identifying and achieving college goals. Since considerable student time and effort has been invested in such activities as improving reading speed and becoming acquainted with the college library, and since agencies outside the college have demanded that students demonstrate "progress" toward degree goals, the colleges have adopted the practice of granting "credit" for many kinds of activities not clearly within the meaning of Education Code Section 78201.5(a).
Courses which are frequently offered for credit (sometimes described as "limited credit" or "nontransferable credit") but which upon analysis of their content properly fall within 78201.5(b) may be classified as:

1. Remedial courses (pre-collegiate or basic skills).
2. Remedial courses at a collegiate level.
3. Student orientation to college.
4. Guidance courses including:
   a) personal adjustment
   b) vocational guidance
   c) college/postcollege career planning
5. Courses for handicapped adults.
6. Courses designed for advanced personal, recreational and non-vocational skills, such as crafts, music, dancing and dramatic performance.
7. Courses in citizenship and English as a second language.
8. Courses designed for professional development of college and university graduates.

Additionally, while most of the courses conducted in settings such as sheltered workshops, work activity centers, state hospitals, convalescent hospitals, nursing homes, and other community care facilities are of a noncredit character—a number continue to be offered for credit.

A general description of the content of these courses is as follows:

1. Remedial Courses (pre-collegiate or basic skills)

   These courses are designed and described as courses to develop a student's skill in reading, writing, or computation to a high school proficiency level. High school graduation credit may be offered under mutual agreement with a high school district. Students may be assigned to these classes on the basis of placement examination.

2. Remedial Courses at the collegiate level.

   These courses are designed to improve the reading, writing, and computational skills of students who have met the proficiency expected of high school graduates but are unable to compete in their collegiate courses. Such courses as "speed reading" using "college level" vocabulary are in this category. A strict application of Education Code Section 78201.5(a) places these courses in a non-credit category because they are not required as part of the subject matter major nor do they meet an elective requirement nor do baccalaureate institutions count them toward degrees.

3. Student Orientation to College.

   These courses are designed to acquaint a new student with the facilities, faculty and administrative regulations of the community college. Faculties believe that such courses save much time and trauma in acculturating the student body found in college today.
4. Guidance Courses including:

(a) personal adjustment
(b) vocational guidance
(c) college/post college career planning

These courses are services attempting to provide a systematic and thorough approach to solving personal problems faced by college students. The courses attempt to help the student develop an objective view of himself, develop a "positive self-image", and develop decision-making skills applicable to his personal as well as his vocational life.

5. Courses for handicapped adults.

These courses are services specifically for handicapped individuals. The courses are intended to help the student adapt to college life inspite of his handicaps and so each student's needs are separately and uniquely identified. Activities are designed to meet those unique individual needs. The courses in this category do not include courses designed to train for "employable skills" such as braille or dactyloidy.

6. Courses designed for advanced personal recreational and non-vocational skills.

These courses are designed to develop skills to a degree not commensurate with occupational targets appropriate to community college graduates or are designed to develop skills appropriate to the avocational interests of the clientele served.


It has long been regarded as an appropriate role of free public education to provide instruction designed to acculturate recently arrived emigres. The Education Code assigns this responsibility to the high schools; however, by mutual agreement with the high school district, some colleges are engaged in this activity.

8. Courses designed for professional development of college and university graduates.

The Legislature, through the Higher Education Act of 1964 (E.C. 66010), delineated the functions of the three segments of public higher education and ascribed to the community college segment educatorial efforts "through, but not beyond the second year of college." (E.C. 66701). Many professional, technical and craft associations require of their members continued educational efforts as a condition of active status or licensure. Community colleges, oriented as they are toward their communities, are the most convenient (and sometimes the most qualified) purveyors of the required educational services. Yet such courses may not be offered under Education Code Section 78201.5(a) since by definition they go beyond any academic program designed to grant a degree at the completion of the second year of college.
The issue of the "credit worthiness" of college courses or services recently has been further exacerbated by the passage of Proposition 13 on June 6, 1978, and the implementing legislation which followed. That legislation limited state "apportionment" funds to certain specific categories of noncredit courses. The above discussion enumerates more categories than are addressed in the law and there exists prevalent fear among college administrators that future legislation will further curtail funds available for these kinds of services. It is not surprising that administrators wish to assign "credit" status to as many of their college's offerings as possible for, among other reasons, the protection of their funding base.

Recommendation

In order to clarify the policy surrounding the course and program approval process and to avoid any obvious misinterpretation of the law or regulations the Board should endorse the practice of the Chancellor's Office and the several colleges to strive in every way to meet the educational needs of the clientele to be served in each college's community. Furthermore, the Board should recognize that it is the community college's unique responsibility to provide the above discussed services as they are needed, and that an appropriate funding mechanism to guarantee the provision of these services should be established during the next legislative session.