

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 20, 2012

To: Dr. Sandi E. Cooper
Chair, University Faculty Senate

From: Alexandra W. Logue 
Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost

Frederick P. Schaffer 
General Counsel and Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs

C: Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and Cabinet
Board of Trustees
College Presidents
Chief Academic Officers
Council of Faculty Governance Leaders
University Faculty Senate Representatives

Thank you for your memorandum dated February 15, 2012 reporting the February 10, 2012 Council of Faculty Governance Leaders' statement ("the Statement"). Following are responses to the three items in the Statement.

1. It is correct that the guidelines from the Office of Academic Affairs state that all Common Core courses must be 3 credits and 3 hours. It is also correct that the Board resolution on Pathways does not specify that the courses be 3 credits or 3 hours. However, the Board resolution on Pathways does specify that the Pathways Task Force will recommend a Common Core structure to the Chancellor, who is to make the final decision, and who will implement the structure. The final Common Core recommendations of the Pathways Task Force, which consisted of 47 faculty, 4 campus-based administrations and 4 students, were submitted to the Chancellor on December 1, 2012, and accepted by the Chancellor on December 12, 2012. Those recommendations specified that all courses in the Common Core would be 3 credits. The Task Force had originally recommended a mixed set of 3-credit and 4-credit courses, but ultimately decided to recommend courses that were all of equal weight. In addition, the Task Force had originally recommended a 4-credit science laboratory course, but ultimately decided to recommend a 3-credit course that involved active learning in science, but not necessarily a traditional weekly lab. Pursuant to the authority delegated to him by the Board of Trustees, the Chancellor adopted that recommendation. Although some general education courses at CUNY currently carry more hours than credits, that practice is not consistent among or even within CUNY's campuses, nor is it a consistent practice outside of CUNY.

2. Contrary to the Statement, the guidelines issued by the Office of Academic Affairs *do* allow majors to require courses that are also courses in the Common Core. The guidelines simply state that majors cannot require their students to take those courses as their Common Core courses. However, departments can advise their students that if they take those courses they will receive both major and Common Core credit. Similarly, it is also the case that departments can establish pre-major requirements that consist of Common Core courses. For example, a Nursing major might be required to take Biology. However, again, a Nursing major may not be required to take Biology for his or her Common Core course, just advised that if s/he does so, s/he will satisfy both major and Common Core requirements. What is also not permissible is for departments to require that certain Common Core courses be taken as pre-major courses when such courses are not typically needed for such a major. This is consistent with the authority of the Board and the Chancellor regarding curricular matters and in no way violates the academic freedom of the faculty to determine the content of their classes.

3. It is correct that New York State Education Law does not establish credit/hour requirements for courses and gives institutions of higher education latitude in assigning these requirements within certain guidelines. However, the requirements set forth in the Pathways Initiative were authorized by the CUNY Board of Trustees and approved by the Chancellor pursuant to the authority delegated to him.

We would like to take this opportunity to address an issue not raised explicitly by the statement of the Council of Faculty Governance Leaders but one that has generated comment in connection with the Pathways Initiative – *i.e.*, whether faculty should receive workload credit for contact hours beyond the number of student credit hours assigned to a course. (This is a different issue from how many classroom/laboratory hours are required of the students.) Based on our review of the data, this issue appears to be extraordinarily complex, with wide variations among CUNY campuses and inconsistencies even within a single campus as to both the rationale for doing so and the application of that rationale to particular departments and/or types of courses. In addition, the issue extends beyond just the courses that may be included in the Common Core and/or College Option as part of the Pathways Initiative. The Chancellor has therefore concluded that it is advisable to consider the issue more fully and more broadly, including further consultation with academic administrators and faculty. While this issue is under review, faculty should proceed with their work on the campuses in developing and identifying courses for the Pathways Initiative under the guidelines previously specified. In the meantime, no changes will be made in current practices regarding faculty workload credit for contact hours.