How Repeatability Regulations Are Devastating the Arts and Taking the Community out of our Colleges

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In the summer of 2012, prior to the passage of Prop 30, when there were hundreds of thousands of students that the California Community College system was unable to serve, the Community College Board of Governors passed regulations that prohibit a student who successfully completes a class from repeating it, except under certain circumstances. (Students can repeat courses required for transfer to the University of California or California State University, related to participation in intercollegiate athletics, or required for vocational or licensure reasons.) The regulations became effective in the fall of 2013.

In the context of five years of some of the worst budget cuts colleges had ever seen—the Chancellor’s office reported that some 20% of classes had been cut system-wide—these measures made sense to some.

Then, in November of 2012, voters passed Prop 30 (primarily a tax on the wealthy to fund education). Prop 30 helped resuscitate public education in our state, where all levels of education had been severely reduced. Funding for the community college system more or less stabilized. But these restrictive regulations are still in place.

The regulations aimed to cut down enrollment in the arts and physical education, where statewide enrollment was high. Under pressure to cut enrollments, and in conjunction with other trends in education leaning towards objectives and outcomes, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) provided guidance (in 2011) that informed the new regulations. The thinking behind this was that curriculum should be leveled where appropriate, and students should not need to repeat a course that they have passed successfully. As ASCCC leaders explain in a recent article, “The educational principle behind credit courses is based on achieving objectives and outcomes . . . If the student achieves those objectives and outcomes, the student passes; if the student does not, the student should not pass.”

Under the recent regulations a student can only successfully complete a course one time in most cases. There is an additional factor for students in the arts and kinesiology: students may have no more than four enrollments in any given group of active participatory courses that are related in content (commonly known as a family of courses). This is a huge blow to anyone serious about art, especially those students who didn’t (and don’t) have access to private music, theater, or other arts classes. In many cases, the new regulations make the maximum number of courses allowed in community colleges the minimum needed for transfer to State or UC. This doesn’t take into account the fact that some students may need more than that minimum to build proficient performance skills and portfolios that will be needed to
get in many four-year colleges. Cabrillo has sent many students of the visual and performing arts to top-notch institutions in the past; will now be restricted from following similar paths of success.

Other areas impacted by these changes include the Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs such as Journalism, Digital Media, Computer Information Systems, Welding, and Culinary Arts, areas where curriculum or technology changes over time or where students may need additional practice with the course material (note that a petition process is applicable in situations that are needed for transfer or certificates). Students are also limited in areas such as Creative Writing and World languages. And Work Experience students/courses have been heavily impacted (the ASCCC is in the process of addressing this item.)

Overall, the changes to repeatability align with a narrow vision of colleges that focuses on academic transfer and CTE certificate or licensing programs and allows students two years to get through the system. It does not take into account those updating skills for jobs not associated with licensing requirement or students attempting to pursue goals outside of transfer.

These regulations have gone too far. While some colleges have managed the curriculum in a way that enables them to maintain their programs, from what we are hearing students in numerous programs across the state are, and will continue to be, severely impacted by these regulations.

We would love nothing more than to get back to a Master Plan Vision of education that provides quality education for all Californians. In the meantime, we'd like to save our art programs and bring back access for students who may need to repeat a course for a reason other than (low level) transfer or a certificate. We hope you will join us.

What you can do:

Sign up for email alerts by sending an email to ccf@ccftcabrillo.org; please include repeatability advocacy in the title.

Sign our online petition at: http://chn.ge/1m4ICET

The ASCCC passed a resolution at their plenary session last week (Nov. 13-14, 2014) that they will:
1. Gather information from local senates about the impact of the program level of the 2012 changes to the repeatability regulations and hold a breakout session at the Spring 2015...
Plenary;
2. Research the impact at the program level of the 2012 changes to the repeatability regulations, use the research to inform possible future actions or guidance regarding this issue, and present the research at the Spring 2016 Plenary Session.

Follow up is needed in your local senates. If your program faculty are affected by this, please be sure to get local senates on board!

Encourage your organizations to support rescinding or modifying these regulations. In particular, we need support from:

1. Student Senates & Clubs
2. Legislators
3. Local Governing Boards
4. The Community College Board of Governors