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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Nava DATE TYPED 3/14/05 HB \_\_\_\_\_

SHORT TITLE Common Lower-Division College Course Numbers SB 161/aSEC/aSFL#1

ANALYST Williams

### APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY05	FY06	FY05	FY06		
			Indeterminate; see fiscal implications	Recurring	General Fund/Other State Funds

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### REVENUE

Estimated Revenue		Subsequent Years Impact	Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY05	FY06			
		Indeterminate; see fiscal implications	Recurring	General Fund/Other State Funds

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Revenue Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LFC Files
- Commission on Higher Education (CHE)
- New Mexico Association of Community Colleges (NMACC)
- Education Commission of the States, Teacher Preparation Policy Toolkit
- Board of Governors of California Community Colleges
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- Council of University Presidents response not received

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of SFI #1

Senate Floor Amendment #1 adds a new section of statute directing the CHE to establish a process to identify substantially equivalent courses. The process must:

- Include a procedure for each course in which faculty members representing each segment teaching the academic discipline reach mutual agreement on material to be taught and competencies to be gained;
- Ensure course content is comparable across institutions offering the course;

- Ensure agreed upon course content is in fact delivered to students in a given course and that “students successfully completing the course will achieve like competencies”; and
- Ensure content requirements are sufficient to prepare students for upper division course-work in the field.

#### Synopsis of Senate Education Committee Amendment

The Senate Education Committee amendment makes numerous clarifying changes to achieve the intent of the bill. Further, the amendment proposes changes to align with work that has already been completed on modules, to reflect that there might be minor differences between them.

The legislature should be aware of nuances surrounding Amendment #17, which eliminates the specific requirement to report associated funding reductions at institutions. The amendment adds much more general language. The financial implications of this bill would be important to track. Note existing statutory language on page 8, lines 4 to 11 directs the CHE to “calculate the number of credits refused at the receiving institution and recommend a corresponding reduction of legislative funding to the next session of the legislature.” CHE does not currently follow this practice.

#### Synopsis of Original Bill

Endorsed by the Legislative Education Study Committee.

Senate Bill 161 amends the Post-Secondary Education Articulation Act. The bill requires public, post-secondary institutions to use a common course numbering and naming system for lower division courses. The general education core as well as the discipline module are defined. The bill directs the general education core, discipline modules for business and early childhood education and the common course numbering and naming system for all courses in those modules to be effective by spring semester 2006. Three additional discipline modules will be effective not later than fall semester 2007, followed by an additional three discipline modules in place by fall semester 2008. The bill authorizes an interim mechanism of a statewide equivalency table until the common system is in place.

Further, the bill requires public institutions to accept general education core and transfer modules as a block. This policy would not apply to limited access programs. The bill provides a new section of statute to authorize an articulation complaint process and requires the receiving institution to reimburse students for tuition, fees and books for those common courses not accepted for transfer. The bill requires oversight and complaint investigation by the Commission on Higher Education.

Finally, an annual report to the legislative finance committee, legislative education study committee and the office of the governor regarding the status of articulation programs and the transfer of students between institutions will be made. The report will include outcomes measures relating to transfer, persistence and graduation rates.

#### Significant Issues

NMACC notes “the Legislature attempted to solve the problem (course transferability) with the passage of the Post-Secondary Education Articulation Act in 1995...required the establishment

of a 35 hour common general education core curriculum and 64 hour transfer modules. While the law did help improve the transfer of credits for transfer students, problems still persisted due to how colleges interpreted the law and paid attention to its provision.”

The recent work of a CHE Task Force on Articulation is significantly represented in the bill; the NMACC notes “SB 161 addresses most of the articulation task force recommendations.”

### **PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS**

According to the NMACC, the CHE Task Force on Articulation is proposing four new performance measures for this initiative. Section 21-1B-6 of the bill includes language to address data on outcomes of transfer rates, persistence rates after transfer and graduation rates.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The bill does not include an appropriation. The bill requires institutions to reimburse students for tuition, fees and books for those common courses not accepted for transfer; the receiving institutions would bear the burden of the reimbursement cost. The magnitude of this cost to other state funds is unknown at the present time.

The bill would have indirect fiscal effects. To the extent replication of courses is reduced for transfer students and to the extent that time to degree is reduced for transfer students as a result of this initiative, then higher education instruction and general formula costs would be reduced. As well, institutional revenues from tuition and fees could be somewhat reduced if the initiative is successful. On the other hand, if transfer is a significant problem contributing to drop-out statistics, this initiative could contribute to student retention and persistence, effectively pushing costs upward and institutional revenues upward.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

Administrative costs of implementation are not addressed in the bill. CHE does not note the need for additional administrative resources.

### **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

This initiative is an attempt to address transfer and articulation concerns, but may not represent a complete resolution of the concerns. Transfer is the procedure by which credit hours a student earns at one institution are applied toward a degree at another institution. Articulation refers to the statewide policies and/or agreements among institutions to accept the transfer of credits.

An Education Commission of the States (ECS) *Teacher Preparation Policy Toolkit Briefing Paper on Articulation and Transfer* notes:

- 23 states have developed statewide general education common core curricula
- At least 17 states have adopted statewide common course numbering systems
- Colleges and universities may enter into bilateral articulation agreements regarding the transfer of an agreed-upon set of courses between specific academic departments and programs.
- Concurrent enrollment programs can improve transfer opportunities

- Development of new targeted associate degree programs with a single set of standards and courses that are articulated among participating two- and four-year institutions.

A recent National Conference of State Legislatures summary of common source numbering systems in selected states is attached.

Significant issues for the New Mexico initiative remain to be addressed and/or implemented. Faculty participation will be key for the initiative's success. NMACC notes significant time and effort by faculty groups to develop and sustain the proposed changes in each academic discipline. Faculty discipline groups need to develop consensus on competencies for each course or sequence of courses. Consensus may be more difficult to achieve in certain disciplines, such as computer science or criminal justice. Certain types of courses may pose difficulty in reaching common ground, such as credit for life experience. Further, the appropriate grade point average for course acceptance may need be developed. Some institutions may have difficulty in modifying software to adjust to the new course numbering system; in these cases, crosswalk tables may be developed.

In *Common Course Numbering and Articulation* prepared for the Board of Governors of California Community Colleges, July 9-10, 2001, "common course numbering is not, in and of itself, a system of articulation. In articulation, course content is reviewed, not the course number or title. Common numbering can be the result of articulation. After articulation is achieved (comparable content has been determined), numbering systems can be used to display the results" (page 6). Further the report notes "Common numbering alone cannot achieve this educational planning. Students must decide upon an educational plan based upon content. All students should be encouraged to use transfer and counseling services to develop and amend educational plans" (page 6). The report discusses the responsibility of students "to read all materials and information provided regarding transfer requirements, seek advice in complicated decisions and immediately seek information each time they change their targeted goal of segment, institution or major" (page 2).

## POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. What is the timeline to complete the system envisioned in this legislation?
2. Will any institutions have difficulty with compliance?
3. Will courses be considered comparable or identical? What are the resultant implications for the success of the initiative?
4. How will commonality be achieved? Will academic committees approve course syllabuses, faculty credentials and/or assigned texts? Will specified competencies be required?
5. How will membership on academic discipline committees be determined?
6. Would transfer of individualized common courses be permitted or would an entire transfer module need to be completed for eligibility?
7. What are the exceptions in the limited access programs?
8. How will student information and advising needs under the new system be addressed?
9. Will the CHE prepare the calculation required under existing language on page 8, lines 4 to 11?

National Conference of State Legislatures

Summary of Common Course Numbering Systems in Selected States

State	Program	Origin	Cost	Summary
Florida	Statewide Course Numbering System	State Statute	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Program in which Associate in Arts degree graduates of a state-approved Florida community college is guaranteed admission as a junior to any state university as long as the institution has space, money and the curriculum to meet the student's needs.</li> <li>● The common course numbering system maintains course information and identifying numbers and prefixes for more than 120,000 courses offered by 38 state supported vocational schools, 28 public community colleges, 10 state universities, and at least 2 private two-year colleges. This system is maintained by approximately 170 faculty discipline committees, 78 institutional coordinators, and 2 Department of Education employees.</li> </ul>
Illinois	Transfer or the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI)	Voluntary Agreement Between the Community Colleges and the Four-Year Institutions - Administered by the Illinois Board of Higher Education	Approximately \$500,000 per year plus administrative costs and salaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The purpose of the program is to identify common curriculum requirements across associate and baccalaureate degrees and across institutions in order to facilitate student transfer. The Illinois Transferable General Education Core Curriculum is a package of freshman and sophomore level courses that will transfer from one to another of more than 100 participating schools and fulfill the lower-division general education requirements at the new (transfer) school.</li> <li>● The program requires 3 website administrators, 2 co-coordinators, and 2.5 program management positions.</li> <li>● The Illinois Transferable General Education Core Curriculum identifies the common general education coursework. The Baccalaureate Majors' Recommendations build on the transferable General Education Core Curriculum by identifying major and prerequisite courses that students need to complete to transfer as a junior into the specific major.</li> <li>● Panels meet twice a year to review all courses in the program. This includes 5 general education panels (each with about 20 members) and 25 major panels.</li> <li>● All community colleges in the state have voluntarily adopted this program.</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Because this is a voluntary program, there is not a required number or percentage of courses that the institutions must submit to the common course numbering system.</li> </ul>
Minnesota	MNTransfer (Minnesota General Education Transfer Curriculum)	An agreement signed by all Minnesota public higher education institutions.	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students who complete the Minnesota General Education Transfer Curriculum at one of the participating schools and then transfer to any other Minnesota public baccalaureate degree-granting university will have fulfilled all lower-division general education requirements.</li> <li>● Within the 40 credits required, there are ten goals. One course may fulfill a maximum of two goals; however, credits will only be counted once in total. If students fulfill the ten goal areas in fewer than 40 credits, they select courses within any of the goals to achieve the 40-credit total. In addition to the 40 credit core, the AA requires 22 additional credits which may be MnTC goal-fulfilling courses, pre-major requirements, or electives and 2 credits in Health/Physical Education. The AS and the AAS degrees and the diplomas and certificates at Century College also use MnTC courses to fulfill their general education requirements.</li> <li>● The Minnesota Transfer Curriculum commits all public colleges and universities in the state of Minnesota to a broad educational foundation that integrates a body of knowledge and skills with a study of contemporary concerns all essential to meeting the social, personal, and career challenges individuals will face now and in the 21st Century.</li> </ul>
Wyoming	Common Course Numbering System	Special Law (never codified). However, it is still binding and has not been amended since the law was adopted in 1991.	The cost is not split out from either the University or Casper College Budget. Responsibilities are assigned to existing personnel and are not accounted for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Common course numbering system in which over 3000 courses are transferable between the community colleges and the University of Wyoming, and over 400 general education courses share common titles, numbers, and expected learning outcomes.</li> <li>● The University of Wyoming and the community colleges have developed a unique partnership, the products of which are a state-wide Higher Education Transfer Guide, which lists over 3000 courses that are transferable between the community colleges and the University of Wyoming, and among the community colleges.</li> </ul>

			<p>separately by either institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Faculty at the University of Wyoming review and approve all Wyoming community college courses for transfer and all "commonly named and numbered courses."</li><li>● These agreements are reached through annual "articulation meetings" of University and community college faculty in all of the core general education areas. More than 20 articulation meetings are held each year where University and community college faculty come together to discuss curriculum and make joint decisions concerning course content and expected learning outcomes.</li><li>● The Higher Education Transfer Guide is maintained and published annually by the University of Wyoming.</li></ul>
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