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South Carolina Course Alignment Project

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A Message from Dr. Gail M. Morrison, CHE Deputy Director and Director of Academic Affairs & Licensing

Despite the economic woes we have all experienced of late, it seems to me there are also many good things happening in our state and two things in particular have me very excited at this time: first, springtime and warmer weather are just around the corner, and secondly, the South Carolina Course Alignment Project is indeed moving full steam ahead!

I would like to take this opportunity to offer a sincere word of thanks to each of you who has worked and continues to work so diligently to ensure that this important statewide project is a success. I would also like to recognize with great thanks the ongoing efforts of our provosts, chief academic officers, K-12 leaders, steering committee members, Expanded ACAP members, and especially the efforts of the faculty members in our colleges, universities, and schools who are participating as Course Design Team members as well as those who will participate in the upcoming paired course pilot across the state. Together, I know that our efforts will make a clear difference in student preparation and success! Thank you for all you have done and continue to do!

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First Design Team Meeting Held

The first meeting of the South Carolina Course Alignment Project (SC CAP) paired course design teams in English, mathematics, and science was held on January 17 and 18, 2009, as a two-day workshop to begin the work of developing aligned high school and college courses.

Faculty from five high schools, three technical colleges, and three four-year higher education institutions were selected to serve as curriculum experts who will design aligned courses in English, mathematics, and science. At the workshop, Dr. Terri Ward and colleagues from the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) and Commission on Higher Education staff provided support to the design teams and facilitated the process for developing paired courses. As part of the process, the design teams selected the courses to be aligned and produced draft documents for those courses by the end of the two-day working sessions.

According to a recent report, *Measuring Up 2008: The State Report Card for Higher Education*, the percentage of students who graduate from high school within four years in South Carolina is one of the smallest in the country. About 32% of young adults aged 18 to 24 are currently enrolled in college and only 56% of first-time, full-time students complete a bachelor's degree within six years of college entrance. The work of the design team members is aimed at improving alignment between high school and postsecondary courses in English, mathematics, and science and will help address these problems by improving retention, reducing the need for remediation, and increasing on-time postsecondary graduation.



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Design Team Members Selected

Fifteen high school and college faculty members from across South Carolina were selected to participate as design team members who will create aligned courses in English, mathematics, and science. Design team members were chosen because of their in-depth knowledge in each academic field, their representation of the different types of educational institutions in South Carolina, and because of their experience teaching in more than one type of educational institution. In addition to the South Carolina faculty members, each design team includes one national content expert with experience designing paired courses from secondary education and another expert with experience designing paired courses from post-secondary education from outside of South Carolina.

English Design Team Members

The English design team members selected are:

- Julie Ellington, Tri-County Technical College
- Cynthia Mayfield, York Technical College
- Lloyd Willis, Lander University
- Mary Zeigler, Bamberg-Ehrhardt High School
- Sydney Elliott, Tillamook Bay Community College, Tillamook, Oregon
- Virginia Farkas, South Eugene High School, Eugene, Oregon

Mathematics Design Team Members

The mathematics design team members are:

- Sherrie Holland, Piedmont Technical College
- Mary Krohn, Clemson University
- Gerald Marshall, Tri-County Technical College
- Karen Threlkeld, T.L. Hanna High School
- Michel Kovcholovsky, Lane Community College, Eugene, Oregon
- Cindy Parker, Elmira High School, Elmira, Oregon

Science Design Team Members

The science design team are:

- Galen Dehay, Tri-County Technical College
- John Edwards, Piedmont Technical College
- John Kinard, Greenwood High School
- Amy Pope, Clemson University
- Darlene Slusher, Coastal Carolina University
- Holly Sullivan, Lugoff-Elgin High School
- Ruth Truluck, Wando High School
- Jud Landis, Sheldon High School, Eugene, Oregon
- Greg Mulder, Linn Benton Community College, Albany, Oregon

Feedback from the Design Team Members:

“I understand the importance of preparing my students for college-level rigor, but I am not always sure what that rigor looks like. During my 14 years of teaching, I have never had the opportunity to sit and talk with a college chemistry professor. [Doing so at the design team meeting] helped me better understand the skills my students need to be successful in their next chemistry course.”

- Holly Sullivan, science design team

“I was very happy to see that teachers at each level--high school, technical college, and university--shared very clear ideas of what students in English classes should accomplish in their final year of high school and their first year of higher education.”

- Lloyd Willis, English design team

“It was extremely revealing to compare the standards and expectations that high school educators have for their students leaving high school compared to my own expectations for students entering college.”

- Mary Krohn, mathematics design team



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The Commission on Higher Education staff join EPIC staff members and institutional administrators in congratulating these outstanding educators and would like to thank them for their invaluable contributions and dedication to this phase of the project. A statewide press release has been issued from the Commission recognizing each design team member.

Development of Aligned Courses

Educators selected for the design teams are reviewing the South Carolina College Readiness Reference Standards, the results of the previously-conducted alignment study, and sample syllabi to develop examples of aligned courses. For each aligned course, the design teams are developing example assignments with clear and measureable course outcomes, scoring rubrics, grading criteria, and other course artifacts. Each course will also include a common approach to writing. The design teams will also ensure the courses are aligned to the College Readiness Reference Standards and that each exit-level high school course chosen for alignment is paired with a corresponding entry-level college course. The design teams will complete their work and submit final course documents by March 31, 2009. Aligned courses will help to promote academic success as students leave high school and enroll in colleges and universities.

“The South Carolina Course Alignment Project is a ground-breaking effort to forge stronger connections between high schools and colleges so that more students go on to college prepared to succeed once they arrive there. We are quite pleased that the initial design workshops elicited such a positive response from South Carolina high school and college faculty. We look forward to continuing this work and to making available to all South Carolina schools and colleges course pairs that can lead to stronger connections between high schools and colleges locally and statewide.”

- Dr. David Conley
CEO, Educational Policy Improvement Center

The paired courses under development are listed below.

English

High School Courses:

English 3 (American Literature/Composition)
English 4 (British Literature/Composition)

Postsecondary Courses:

American Literature
British Literature
English Composition I

Mathematics

High School Courses:

Tech Math 4*

Pre-Calculus

Postsecondary Courses:

College Algebra
Probability and Statistics
Elementary Calculus

* Tech Math 4 was selected for alignment because of the large number of students statewide who are typically enrolled in that course and because design team members believe the high school Algebra II course is already well-aligned with College Algebra.



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Science

High School Courses:

Biology
Chemistry
Physics

Postsecondary Courses:

Biological Sciences I
College Chemistry I
University Physics (Algebra-based)
University Physics (Calculus-based)

Project Activities

The South Carolina Course Alignment Project is divided into three phases from July 2007 through August 2010:

- Phase I – Analyze Alignment Issues
- Phase II – Create Materials
- Phase III – Disseminate Materials and Explore Applications

For more information about the South Carolina Course Alignment Project or to find out how you can get involved, please visit www.epiconline.org/south_carolina

Phase I Activities

Completed **Phase I** activities include:

- An environmental scan (discrepancy analysis) which examined K-16 alignment issues in South Carolina.
- A video presentation by Dr. David Conley which provided a project overview.
- Creation of the Steering Committee charged with oversight and strategic direction for the project.
- Review of college readiness standards for use in the syllabus review portion of the project.
- Submission of course nominations for participation in the alignment study.

Phase II Activities

Completed **Phase II** activities include:

- Submission of design team nominations by secondary and postsecondary institutions.
- Review of college readiness standards for use in paired courses.

Current **Phase II** activities:

- Development of aligned courses.
- Recruitment of pilot implementers to teach aligned courses.

Upcoming **Phase II** activity:

- Pilot implementation of aligned courses in South Carolina classrooms (academic year 2009 – 2010).



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Related News – Course Articulation and Transfer System

The Commission on Higher Education is pleased to announce it has procured the systems and services of AcademyOne Inc., of West Chester, Pennsylvania, to implement a web-based course articulation and transfer system statewide. In response to the Education and Economic Development Act of 2005 (EEDA), the Commission on Higher Education sought a course articulation and transfer system to facilitate student transitions between and among South Carolina's institutions of higher education. The Commission on Higher Education and South Carolina's higher education institutions desired a system that would provide the state with an on-demand, web-based platform to provide information and services for transfer students and the institutions that serve them. As such, the system will:

- display detailed and up-to-date information on degree pathways;
- provide students with an easy way to access transfer agreements developed between public institutions in a searchable database; and
- enable students to compare current courses against equivalent courses at another institution and learn how those courses meet degree requirements for a specific major.

AcademyOne will offer South Carolina a unique approach designed to:

- enable institutions to display course equivalency information and course articulation processes that address college transfer, which will enhance current operations and help students succeed across institutions by providing improved guidance;
- enable institutions to coordinate formal and informal alignment efforts with other institutions inside and outside the state integrated with their current infrastructure, systems and practices;
- minimize the disruption and efforts needed to support a centralized, coordinated college transfer solution;
- streamline publishing information and processes to support the rendering of each institution's programs and course offerings, including requirements for degree completion. Doing so will help institutions present their institutional offerings in a framework that will serve their communities with greater consistency and create a common theme of coordination across participating institutions; and
- improve student advising, tracking, and persistence across institutions to help efforts designed to foster student degree completion and student persistence inside the state.

AcademyOne will establish a clearinghouse for South Carolina to support shared processes, formats, and content, and will provide the integration services needed to link institutional-based tools and data that will be rendered through a standards-based user interface and a customized South Carolina transfer and articulation portal. This approach will allow the state to avoid implementing a one-size-fits all solution for degree audit and advising, yet enable institutions to support a common set of transfer functions including:

- the delivery of prospective degree audit reports for the majors they wish to support;
- the delivery of transfer maps between institutions;
- a common means for students to import course histories; and
- alerts and coordination unprecedented in higher education.



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AcademyOne will provide customized transfer profiles and management centers to facilitate how each institution desires to express its level of coordination with other senders and receivers. In addition, each institution will be included in a national dataset, enabling prospective students to compare information and guide their course planning efforts regardless of the student's state of origin.

Did You Know?

Through ongoing efforts with the SC CAP, Winthrop University and York Technical College are creating a three-way partnership with local schools districts such as Fort Mill and Rock Hill. This partnership will be involved in piloting paired courses, but the resulting collaboration will extend far beyond the course alignment project. The schools plan to align courses that are not included in the scope of the SC CAP and to discuss regularly issues related to the transition from high school to college as well as issues related to the transition from a two-year to four-year institution. For example, this summer, Winthrop University and York Technical College faculty plan to refine and continue work that began in February 2008, and will meet to discuss the content, competencies, and learning outcomes of common courses.

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education Contact Us

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