TO: Presidents, State-operated Campuses  
       Community Colleges

FROM: Provost Lavallee  

Date: September 7, 2011

SUBJECT: Degree Planning Initiative

I am very pleased to announce the kickoff of an exciting initiative to dramatically enhance student degree planning services across the University through the implementation of state-of-the-art software tools for students and their advisors. As mentioned in previous correspondence, SUNY has licensed the DegreeWorks software from SunGard Higher Education for all campuses to support this initiative, which has the dual objectives of providing students considering transfer essential information about their progress toward degree completion and improving degree planning services for all enrolled students. It is important to note that this initiative is funded by a Federal grant through the State Education Department.

One goal of this project is to implement a university-wide system that allows potential transfer students the ability to:

- Perform a degree audit that compares their course and general education history to the degree requirements for certain programs at all campuses,
- Conduct a “what if” degree analysis for up to three campuses simultaneously, and
- Access the course offerings at all institutions.

In order to support this new university-wide system, all campuses will need to maintain in DegreeWorks their degree requirements for a set of undergraduate programs that are considered by most transfer students, general education requirements, and course equivalencies with other campuses. While campuses may choose to use other software for degree planning for matriculated students, we strongly recommend that campuses fully implement DegreeWorks given its advanced features. In addition to degree audits, DegreeWorks allows students to maintain online multi-semester course plans, compare those plans to scheduled course offerings, and perform sophisticated “what if” analyses, among other features. It is also much easier to maintain and provides campus administrators with important planning information. Apart from this initiative, five campuses have already begun the implementation of DegreeWorks and many other campuses have expressed interest in its use.
The grant funds have allowed us to license the software for all campuses, and to contract with SunGard Higher Education to develop the university-wide services for transfer services, train campuses on the software, and enter degree requirements into the software for certain programs at all campuses. Campuses fully implementing DegreeWorks will be able to complete the entry of degree requirements with their own staff and/or take advantage of a university-wide service for maintaining degree requirements that is being considered. The current plan is for campuses to begin the implementation of DegreeWorks as cohort groups (3-4 campuses) starting the first quarter of 2012, and it is expected that each cohort will require six to seven months to complete the implementation. We have established the attached set of principles to guide this project.

A project of this scope requires significant organization and planning. We will soon establish representative advisory and working groups to assist with project planning and to guide it to successful completion. At this time, we ask that you identify a campus lead for the initiative who will be responsible for coordination with the university-wide project team. Please forward by September 29, 2011, the name, title, office and cell phones, and email address of the campus lead to Dave Powalyk, CIO at System Administration at Dave.Powalyk@suny.edu (518) 320-1212. We will be appointing the Project Director for the initiative shortly who will lead the project team through to completion.

Working with the campus leads, the Project Director will soon schedule online demonstrations of DegreeWorks and begin campus-specific planning for the cohort group implementations.

I am extremely excited about this initiative and the positive impact it will have on all of our students. Please contact either Dave Powalyk or me if you have questions or would like to discuss the project.

Thank you.

Attachment