Date: October 1, 1980

From: Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs, Policy and Planning

Subject: Academic Policy Issues of Concern

From time to time over the past year we have attempted to advise campuses on a variety of academic policy issues which have come to the fore in financial audits of campus expenditures, litigation in the courts, reviews of academic standards and operations by external agencies and correspondence from students, parents and citizens at large. The Regulations of the Commissioner of Education related to Postsecondary Institutions, now adopted, contain important requirements. In addition, there are related matters of academic policy deserving attention. Following is a summary of these issues.

Registration

Every curriculum creditable toward a degree, or leading to licensure in a profession, or leading to a certificate or diploma must be registered with the Commissioner of Education before a campus may publicize its availability or recruit or enroll students. Therefore only those programs which are registered according to required procedures should be listed in any campus catalogue. In addition, any course offered for credit must be part of a registered curriculum as a general education course, a major requirement, or an elective.

Curricula and Courses

In addition to being registered, each curriculum and its courses must be well defined in writing, with course descriptions clearly stating the subject matter and requirements of each course. The college catalogue is the best place for such descriptions, and this catalogue should be current and up-to-date. Each campus must be sure that in each curriculum courses are offered with sufficient frequency to enable students to complete their programs within the minimum time for completion, depending on the degree level. Credit earned at the undergraduate level must be for "college-level work" and at the graduate level for work designed expressly for graduate students. Academic policies which are applicable to each course,
including its learning objectives and methods of assessing student achievement, must be made explicit by the instructor at the beginning of each term. Where minors are required within a baccalaureate degree curriculum, conditions for fulfilling such requirements should be specified. Ordinarily, such a minor should consist of 18 to 24 semester hours of credit.

Admissions

Students should be admitted through an orderly process using published criteria which must be uniformly applied. Admissions policy should take into consideration the past performance, previous educational experience and other achievements of students (the Commissioner's Regulations use the word "capacity") in determining their ability to undertake a course of study and the ability of the campus to provide the instructional and other support necessary for a student to complete the program. Probably the best approach in all of this is the "truth-in-advertising" concept. Students, as consumers of educational services, are entitled to a fair investment return when they accept an offer of admission. Therefore each campus should attempt to supply in advance to all prospective students accurate information on:

- curricula and courses
- the quality and teaching ability of the faculty
- facilities and campus living conditions where pertinent
- costs and financial aid arrangements available
- support services and other forms of assistance available, and
- future expectancy of successful application of the campus learning experience to further study and career objectives.

Among the published information which the Commissioner's Regulations state should be made available to students in advance of admission are:

- requirements for admission to the institution and to specific curricula
- requirements for residence
- graduation requirements
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- awarding of credit
- degrees, or other credentials
- grading
- standards of progress
- payment of fees of any nature
- refunds
- withdrawals
- standards of conduct
- disciplinary measures
- procedures for redress of grievances.

Counseling

Each campus must provide academic advice to students through faculty or appropriately qualified persons who should be thoroughly familiar with institutional policy and procedures and be available to students on a regular and convenient basis. An effective academic counseling system can enable a student to find a bond to the institution, a bond often forged in the personal relationship between a student and faculty member through the advising process. Non-academic counseling services should also be available to students to deal with the variety of emotional and developmental problems that affect them. However, no campus is expected to allocate resources to deal with major emotional problems of students on a continuing basis.

Record Keeping and Advisement

Every campus must maintain for each student a permanent, complete, accurate and up-to-date transcript of student achievement at the campus. This document is the official cumulative record of the student's academic achievement, and copies should be made available at the student's request, in accordance with stated University policies, or to agencies or individuals authorized by law to receive such records in accordance with provisions of the Buckley Amendment. In addition, an accurate record should also be maintained on any financial aid which is granted to a student.

Although each student has the personal responsibility to be aware of degree requirements in the program undertaken and to know what requirements yet need completion at each stage of progression
through the program, it is also the responsibility of the campus to assist the student in this knowledge. The Registrar's Office, or such other location as may be designated by the campus president, should keep on hand and make available to students a record of their progress and remaining requirements. Campus procedures in this regard should assure that students receive effective guidance as to what requirements are necessary to complete specified programs, be periodically advised by qualified individuals as to their progress toward completion of programs, and the records of their progress be available in a timely fashion to assure completion in normal time limits.

Good Standing and Satisfactory Progress

Each campus will be expected to have a statement identifying its standard of satisfactory academic progress, which will be subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Education as of September, 1981. It is expected that guidelines for this purpose will be issued in the near future by the Commissioner. This standard, in conjunction with other provisions of the Commissioner's Regulations, will be critical in determining the appropriateness of student financial aid.

At the very least this statement will require the inclusion of required levels of achievement to be measured at stated intervals. Criteria for achievement will include, but need not be limited to: (a) the minimum number of credits earned, or courses successfully completed, at each interval, and (b) the minimum cumulative grade point average or similar measure at each interval.

The Campus Catalogue

The campus catalogue is a public statement of programs available, the policies and procedures of the campus educational endeavor, the educational background of the faculty and staff, and the expected conditions of the campus learning and living environment, among others. In recent years the catalogue increasingly has been interpreted in the courts as establishing contractual obligations to students which a campus must fulfill. Information to be provided to both enrolled and prospective students, as listed in the Commissioner's Regulations, is as follows:

- Financial assistance available to students, including state, federal and local institutional programs

- Costs of attending the institution, including tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board and other living expenses
- The refund policy of the institution

- The instructional programs of the institution, including degree, certificate and diploma programs. Included in this description must be a list of the degree, certificate and diploma programs provided, which must be consistent with the inventory of registered degree and certificate programs maintained by the Education Department. The list must contain the official program title, degree and HEGIS code number, and is to be preceded by a statement that enrollment in other than registered or otherwise approved programs may jeopardize a student's eligibility for certain student aid awards. In addition, each degree, certificate or diploma program must be described in terms of both prerequisites and requirements for completion, and the academic year in which each course offering is expected to be taught is to be indicated.

- Program-related facilities. This includes a general description of instructional, laboratory and other facilities directly related to the academic program, in addition to general information describing the total physical plant. Narrative and/or statistical information must be provided about library collections and facilities, student unions, and institution-operated eating places. The hours of operation including holiday and vacation schedules, must be provided.

- Faculty and other instructional personnel. Regular resident faculty must be listed by rank, with the highest degree held by the faculty member and the institution by which such degree was granted, and department or major program area to which such member is assigned. An estimated number of adjunct faculty and teaching assistants in each department or major program area is also to be provided.

- Student retention. Information on student retention and graduation rates is to be provided based on a summary of the most recent cohort survival statistics available to the institution for at least full-time undergraduates.

- Placement of graduates. This information includes summaries of job placement and graduate school placement statistics compiled by the institution when available.
Obviously, information in the catalogue should be current and should avoid misleading and ambiguous assertions, if possible.

Where the same catalogue is used for several years in a row, entering students who are affected by changes in campus policy, not yet included in the official catalogue, should be specifically informed of these matters at the time of admission so that they will not be misled by an outdated catalogue. In no case should a catalogue promise what cannot be fulfilled.

It is also suggested that a statement be included in the catalogue by way of notice that provisions in the catalogue may be changed during the course of the year.

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These items represent the most important issues which have been brought to our attention, though obviously there are many other concerns related to the issue of quality. Probably you are well aware of these issues, and have in place policies and procedures to deal with them. To the extent that this is true, please look upon my comments as a sympathetic effort to be helpful. Should you have any comments, they would be most welcome.

James E. Perdue

cc: Chancellor Wharton

This memorandum addressed to:

Presidents, State-operated Campuses
Deans, Statutory Colleges
Presidents, Community Colleges

Copies for information sent to:

President Neville
Vice Provost Spencer