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From EVC Vita C. Rabinowitz

To: CAOs

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I write to alert you to a potential problem in how prerequisite courses for degree requirements are presented in course catalogues and other publications and communications. This matter has come to my attention in the context of an ongoing Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) audit at CUNY.

To avoid penalties and fines in a TAP audit, it is essential that colleges maintain full transparency regarding the full requirements for each degree and ensure they are reflected in all versions of the college course catalogue and program descriptions. Clear and complete statements of degree requirements would also satisfy disclosure requirements concerning degree programs as stated in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. Of course, transparency in degree requirements will also help avoid confusion among students and advisers and allow students to make more informed decisions in selecting majors and course schedules.

I advise you to appoint a member of your staff to work with academic departments at your college to review their programs to ensure that any hidden prerequisites are revealed and clearly identified in the catalogues.

As a handy reminder, below are the requisite definitions:

• A pre-requisite is a class the student must take prior to the course in question.
• A concurrent requisite is a class a student is required to take during the same semester as the course in question.
• A co-requisite is a class that the student can take either prior to or concurrently with the class in question.
• There are to be no "hidden" prerequisites in listing program requirements. If a major course has a prerequisite, it automatically becomes part of the program requirements and the credits are added to the total credits for the major.

In addition to the issue of hidden prerequisites, in accordance with the Board policy of 2011 on Creating an Efficient Transfer System, *any course or disciplinary area that is required of all students and is not specifically required for a student's major must fall within the Common Core or College Option courses.* This means that any specific required course must fall within either General Education (including the Common Core and College Option) or major requirements. All other courses are free electives.

• Degree requirements in the catalogues must clearly state both GenEd and major requirements. The same course may satisfy both a major and a Pathways requirement. With the exception of relatively rare cases in which an academic program has received a waiver to specify a course in Pathways (typically due to accreditation or licensure requirements, in programs without free electives), the course must be included as a major requirement. In Pathways it may be listed with an asterisk, indicating that students pursuing this major are strongly advised to choose this particular course as it would satisfy both requirements.

•The description must specify the number of GenEd, major and free electives and provide the total number (or range) of credits in each category, as well as the total number of credits to the degree. In the past, some departments have listed different types of requirements without considering them as a whole; indeed, there have been cases in which it has been mathematically impossible to complete the degree within the number of credits set forth by the Board 60/120 policy. *In such cases, the curriculum will need to be revised.* In exceptional cases, mainly in programs leading to accreditation or professional licensure and including no free electives, a waiver of the Board policy may be requested.

• In listing prerequisites for courses, only the immediate prerequisite should be specified for each course (not the whole list of courses that feed into one another).

• If there are prerequisite courses that may be waived due to the students previous experience (e.g., Span 101, 102, and 201 are waived if a student has had previous language experience), then they must still be listed as part of the program requirements and the hours must be added into the total program hours. There must be a statement indicating that the prerequisites can be waived, explaining the eligibility for such a waiver, and indicating the adjustable range in both the requirement area and general electives unless those credits must be fulfilled through more advanced coursework in which case those advanced requirements must be articulated.

In some cases, the task of the department will consist solely of presenting the existing requirements in a more clear and transparent way.

In other cases, a review and adjustment of degree requirements may be necessary, such as eliminating a prerequisite requirement, reducing the number of free electives to accommodate new major requirements, reducing the number of credits in the major or adding a course to the College Option. *Any changes must be published in the Chancellor's University Report (CUR) prior to their implementation. We expect the review and any applicable local governance approvals to be completed before the end of the next academic year so that such changes may be entered into the CUR no later than Spring 2017, which would allow the revised degree requirements to appear in the 2018 catalogues.*

Please do not hesitate to call Dr. Ekaterina Sukhanova or Mr. Kenneth Norz at my office (646-664-8054) for assistance with these initiatives if needed, or with presenting the revised information in the CUR. Thank you very much for your attention to this important matter.