

What Is Pathways?

Pathways is CUNY's new General Education Framework, scheduled to begin Fall 2013,¹ ostensibly created to facilitate student transfer throughout CUNY.

"Pathways is austerity education."

–Barbara Bowen, President, Professional Staff Congress

How Would Pathways Work?

- Mandates a uniform, university-wide General Education curriculum.
- Establishes a 30-credit "Common Core" for all CUNY colleges, consisting of a 12-credit "Required Core" and an 18-credit "Flexible Core," with courses chosen from five areas of study.²
- Mandates that all Common Core courses fulfill learning outcomes approved by the Chancellor's Office.
- Provides for an additional 12-credit "College Option," designed by each four-year college, required for baccalaureate students.
- Limits courses in the Common Core to three credits.
- Makes General Education courses of all types transferable among all CUNY colleges and requires that all courses taken for credit at one undergraduate CUNY college be accepted for credit at every other CUNY undergraduate college.
- Requires an approved set of entry-level courses for the majors with the highest transfer rates.³

How Was Pathways Developed?

- Originated in a Board of Trustees resolution passed in June 2011 over the objections of the University Faculty Senate and the Professional Staff Congress.
- Developed without regard for the faculty's role in governance, bypassing elected faculty bodies.

- Faculty "participation" in the process has been limited to faculty appointed by the central administration.
- The central administration has insisted on tight deadlines for comment and review, sharply limiting opportunities for discussion across the University.
- The central administration has ignored opposition from the University Faculty Senate, the PSC, college senates, academic discipline councils, academic departments, learned societies, and the nearly five thousand instructional staff who signed the petition for repeal.

What's the Agenda Behind Pathways?

- Pathways is austerity education: it will save the University money, and it will prepare CUNY students for low expectations in the austerity economy.
- Pathways is aligned with a national "reform" agenda, funded by the Gates and Lumina Foundations, among others, that stresses "college completion" above all other measures of a university's quality.
- Pathways accommodates to, rather than challenges, the historic underfunding of CUNY.
- Pathways imposes an impoverished curriculum on a student body that is largely working class and three-quarters people of color.
- Pathways directly assaults faculty power and governance; it is a dramatic step towards the corporate, management-driven university.

What Does Pathways Mean for Us?

What Does Pathways Mean for Faculty?

- Disrespect for the centuries-old role of faculty as experts in their fields.
- An attack on the principles of shared governance and academic freedom.
- Negation of years of work on curriculum and articulation agreements.
- Violation of academic integrity as faculty are forced to teach science courses without labs and as other courses are squeezed into the Pathways framework.
- Potential elimination of diverse course offerings from departments not in the Common Core.
- A unilateral move by the central administration to increase bureaucratic efficiency, save money and further corporatize the University.
- For part-time faculty, potentially fewer available courses and fewer job opportunities.

What Does Pathways Mean for Students?

- A flawed solution to the problem of transfer.
- Impoverished versions of science courses, language study and other areas. Transfer of credits outside of CUNY may be impossible for science courses without labs.
- Students will receive less individual attention from faculty as four-credit courses are sped up to fit into three hours.
- A decline in value of the CUNY degree.

“Pathways offends and insults the faculty’s professional qualifications by presenting a general education menu that ignores our training and expertise.”

*–Sandi Cooper, Chair,
University Faculty Senate*

What Does Pathways Mean for Professional Staff?

- Negation of long experience advising students on articulation between colleges.
- Increased pressure, without adequate staffing and IT support, on staff responsible for advising, registering and ensuring financial assistance to students during and after the transition to Pathways.

“A diluted academic experience masquerading as rigor.”

–Professors Joseph Entin and James Davis, Brooklyn College

Pathways embodies “the subtle racism of low expectations. Pathways consigns our least prepared students to a grim future.”

*–Terrence Martell,
Baruch College*

Why Has the Union Filed a Lawsuit?

- To protect the quality of a CUNY education.
- To defend our rights and our university.
- To demand the repeal of Pathways, which was passed in violation of the CUNY Bylaws.
- To uphold the legal agreement reached in 1997 that reaffirms that CUNY’s faculty, through its elected governance bodies, is responsible for the formulation of policy on academic matters.

1. See <http://bit.ly/PathwaysBoTResolution>.

2. The Required Core includes six English composition credits, three math credits and three science credits. Areas of study in the Flexible Core: World Cultures and Global Issues, U.S. Experience in Diversity, Creative Expression, Individual and Society, and Scientific World.

3. The seven majors with the highest transfer rates are: biology, business, criminal justice, English, nursing, psychology, and teacher education. See <http://bit.ly/TransferMajors>.