

**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL**

**AGENDA ITEM: 6.O**

**DATE: July 26, 2010**

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**SUBJECT: Course Prefixes**

AAC continues to discuss the integrity of the system’s catalog of courses with particular attention to the common course concept that is underpinning ([AAC Agenda item 6.D, March 2010](#)). The Council discussions have recognized the natural tendencies in play that are fraying the system’s catalog of courses and steps have been taken to counteract these (for example, see [http://www.sdbor.edu/administration/academics/aac/documents/02-09AAC\\_6.C\\_system-level\\_curric\\_issues.pdf](http://www.sdbor.edu/administration/academics/aac/documents/02-09AAC_6.C_system-level_curric_issues.pdf) and [http://www.sdbor.edu/administration/academics/aac/documents/04-09AAC\\_6.G\\_common\\_course\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.sdbor.edu/administration/academics/aac/documents/04-09AAC_6.G_common_course_guidelines.pdf)). While course prefixes were not included in these discussions, clearly establishing and applying different prefixes to unique courses in common disciplines does promote differences rather than similarities. More troubling are those cases in which different prefixes are being proposed for common courses since these situations clearly drive differentiation rather than commonality. It could be argued that the set of Common Course Guidelines approved by AAC prohibits this since section II.1. states that common courses shall have common prefixes.

It has been noted that Section X.A of the AAC Guidelines provides a list of approved course prefixes and does identify the institutions authorized to use each of these. Section X.B., Statement of Request for New prefix, is not a live link. In sum, it appears that as the system’s course catalog was developed, AAC recognized the need to establish control over the set of prefixes available but this was never fully formalized. As a first step to move this process forward, a set of guidelines has been drafted. It is recommended that a small working group be established to work on this project.

In addition, a review of the set of prefixes currently in use may be needed. It has been noted that there are some that include only a small set of x9x courses that may simply be artifacts. Perhaps some of these can be deleted.

Members of the Council should be prepared to offer suggestions.

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Establish a working group to refine the draft set of guidelines for the review and approval of new course prefixes.

## Statement of Request for New Prefix

The system's catalog of courses serves as the foundation of its commitment to provide students enrolled the opportunity to use courses offered by any Regental institution to fulfill degree requirements. Specifically, faculty members from the separate institutions have agreed that this catalog includes a set of common courses that are considered equivalent, regardless of the institution that offers instruction. This permits students to know that if they successfully complete a common course it will be recognized as meeting any requirement established including that course at any institution. In sum, this commitment removes the uncertainty that exists when students attempt to transfer completed coursework.

These common courses were established and are maintained using a set of guidelines approved by the Academic Affairs Council. These guidelines include two references to course prefixes. These are:

### II. Guidelines

1. Common courses shall have common CIP codes, **prefixes**, course numbers, course titles, course descriptions, and prerequisite requirements.  
and
8. The prefix need not reflect the name of the department offering the course.

In addition, a segment of the first section of this document, Definitions, also refers indirectly to course prefixes.

### I. Definition

Courses are common if a course offered by one institution has essentially the same content (subjects/breadth) and level of instruction (depth) as a course offered by another institution. Courses approved as meeting system general education requirements are not necessarily common. Any course that is cross-listed, and any 500 level course that is dual-listed, with a common course is also considered to be a common course.

While these guidelines focus on the use of course prefixes with common courses, there are implications for unique courses as well. While in some cases it may make sense for a campus to create a new prefix for new or for existing courses, it must be recognized that this does fragment the catalog. This is of importance in those cases where multiple campuses offer similar programs that use a common prefix. While proposals of this type may be considered, justification will need to be provided and, as with common courses, all campuses using the original prefix will need to be consulted. It is recognized that there are other cases where a campus elects to move an entire set of unique courses from one prefix to another. Often times, these requests are tied to the change in name of a professional program or something similar that is playing out in response to an external driver. As a set, requests of this type do not impact the integrity of the course catalog and these should continue to be expeditiously accepted and approved.

To maintain the integrity of the system's catalog of courses and common course system, the following guidelines will be used as curricular proposals at the course level are processed.

1. A set of approved prefixes will be included in the AAC guidelines and as curricular changes are made, this should be followed. Creation of a new prefix will require the approval of the System CAO and Executive Director.
2. Any curricular changes proposed that involves a common course will retain the common prefix. While on occasion common courses may be cross-listed with another prefix, this should happen only rarely. This will require formal approval by AAC in addition to the System CAO and Executive Director.
3. Any curricular change proposed that involves the creation of a new prefix for courses that represent a discipline/program offered by multiple institutions should be reviewed by these institutions before submission to AAC for action.
4. Any curricular change proposed that involves the creation of a new prefix for courses that represent a discipline/program unique to a single institution should simply address the issues driving the proposal. In these cases, it should be noted that the approved Common Course Guidelines state that the prefix need not reflect the name of the department (academic unit) offering the course.