

## Connecticut

State of Connecticut, Department of Higher Education  
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- 1) Does the state have an identifiable “P-16” effort visible? Who is in charge of this effort?

The Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) and the Department of Higher Education (DHE) have worked together for years to successfully educate the youth of Connecticut. Over the years, this collaboration has resulted in Connecticut’s recognition throughout the country as a leader in educational reform and improvement.

The SDE and DHE have recently received a grant from the National Governors Association (NGA) for a new collaborative effort. Funded for a two year period of time, a Connecticut PK-16 Council has been established to accomplish the following goals:

1. continue support through funding and policy for the development of Connecticut’s Pre-K-16 data system
2. explore how coursework, in all public schools can align seamlessly with post-secondary entrance and graduation criteria , and how assessment practices can be enhanced to provide critical benchmarks, across disciplines, about student readiness for college work and the 21<sup>st</sup> century work place.

The PK-16 Council is under the direction of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Commissioner of Education.

- a) Does the agency include a utility or function on its website designed explicitly to help potential students locate an appropriate college or university to attend?

Yes. <http://www.ctdhe.org/cgi-bin/webplus.exe?script=/db2/school.wml> is the connection that links to all of the state’s colleges and universities.

Connecticut Mentor -- <http://www.ctmentor.org> -- provides students with information about specific institutions, career planning, and application guidance.

The Department of Higher Education’s Education and Employment Information Center -- <http://www.ctdhe.org/EEIC/default.htm> -- is a statewide referral service as well as a central source of free information for anyone who has questions about college, careers and job training in Connecticut.

The Department’s website [www.ctdhe.org](http://www.ctdhe.org) provides a variety of other kinds of information, guidance, and advice.

- 2) Is a mandated or recommended college preparatory curriculum in place in the state’s public high schools?

Such a plan is in the works, the result of collaborative efforts by K-12 schools, colleges and universities, the State Department of Education, and the Department of Higher Education. These have been affirmed by legislative proposals to create such a “default curriculum” for all high school students, including recommendations from the Governor.

- 3) Has the state articulated a set of explicit competencies or skills that define what it means to be “college ready?”

This is one of the goals of the PK-16 Council, particularly as part of the effort to align curriculums.

- 4) Are systematic programs in place in the state that encourage students to accelerate progress by taking college-level courses while still enrolled in high school?

The Board of Governors for Higher Education, through the work of the Department of Higher Education, established the following Dual Enrollment Policy Recommendations in 2006.

State policies should encourage all students to participate in collegiate opportunities by establishing clear guidelines and standards. As a result, the state’s public and independent institutions of higher education should be able to award high school students college credits consistently on the basis of student participation in various collegiate opportunities.

The following are some recommendations for establishing appropriate and applicable standards:

- The state should establish a coordinating mechanism or coordinating body to standardize, publicize, administer, and evaluate all collegiate opportunities for high school students. This coordinating mechanism should identify itself with a commonly accepted program name, such as “Early College Scholars,” “Dual Credit Programs,” etc.
- The state should establish eligibility criteria for high school students to participate in collegiate educational opportunities.
- Public and independent institutions of higher education in Connecticut should consistently recognize the value of Advanced Placement courses and AP examination results and should award students equal numbers of credits for successful completion of those courses and examinations. Such credits might most appropriately be used to help satisfy general education or other programmatic requirements.
- The state should develop a process to standardize institutional programs designed for high school students so that there are common expectations for program costs, curricular contents, and number of college credits awarded. Students participating in the recognized programs should not encounter problems in receiving the standard number of credits towards their general education or certain programmatic requirements by any Connecticut college or university.

- The state coordinating body should build a website to achieve three objectives: provide information to students and parents about such programs, offer on-line AP courses or other appropriate collegiate level courses for high school students, and provide “virtual” academic advising and registration so that students will select and participate in appropriate courses.
- The state should establish scholarship funds so that eligible students – particularly students in urban schools and other students with demonstrated financial need – will receive assistance for AP examination costs as well as for the costs of institutional programs.
- The State Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education should collaborate to collect and analyze student participation data on an annual basis so as to provide answers to the following research questions: Do any of the state’s collegiate educational opportunities make a difference for students when they transition from high school to college? Do college graduates who complete college-level courses while enrolled in high school perform better in college than those who have not participated in college-level courses in high school? Do high school students who have successfully completed college-level courses finish their college studies in a shorter time frame and with less financial burden than those who have not participated in college-level courses? Is the rate of enrollment in remedial courses lower for those high school students who have successfully completed college-level courses than those who have not participated in college-level courses?

Other questions, other avenues of investigation, and various findings will continue to help refine the state’s dual enrollment policies over time. The recommendations listed here will serve as the foundation for current practices and as the framework for appropriate changes in the future.

- 5) Is there a statewide policy present that governs placement into college-level courses or remedial courses? Is a standard set of placement tests recommended or required? If yes, are common cut scores for placement decisions in place or do institutions get to set their own? No. However, there are efforts underway to ensure that Accuplacer cut scores are the same across all twelve Connecticut community colleges and the four Connecticut State University institutions.
- 6) Is there a visible statewide transfer and articulation policy? Does this cover all institutions or only public institutions? What are the specifics of this policy? There are defined transfer and articulation agreements between the University of Connecticut and the Community College System, the Connecticut State University System and the Community College System, and the Vocational-Technical High Schools and the Community College System.

There is also in place the Articulation Model for Nurse Education Mobility, which covers all public and independent nurse preparation programs in the state and includes seamless transition/articulation and transfer pathways from LPN training on the entry side in the field

to MSN and APRN education on the post-baccalaureate professional side. Implementation steps include

- \* Definition of the award of appropriate credit for general education, especially to students who come to one of the degree programs from CNA or LPN training programs or from a hospital-based diploma program
- \* Standardizing entry requirements into nursing programs at all levels,
- \* Defining and measuring learning outcomes and competencies in the profession so that all nursing programs in the state prepare graduates who can meet those expectations and provide appropriate levels of health care to patients
- \* Improving advising of students and providing accurate and up-to-date information in a timely manner to students about professional requirements and transfer procedures.

a) Is the transfer/articulation policy accompanied by a statewide transferable general education requirement? Does this name actual courses and/or credits? Are specific competencies identified that the student should meet through this coursework? Is testing used to guarantee student competency for progress or transfer?

The Department of Higher Education worked for a year with faculty and administrative colleagues from throughout the state's public and independent colleges and universities to define standards of general education in Connecticut. The Connecticut General Education Taskforce began its work with a fundamental discussion about what constitutes a meaningful core of general education and liberal arts offerings, what common academic experience students should have regardless of major, and what the balance between liberal and professional education might at its ideal best be. The Taskforce understood that while preparation for a career is obviously important and while a college education plays a key role in that preparation, it is also clear that men and women will have many jobs and careers in their lives, not only one for which they narrowly prepare when they are 18 or 20, and that a general education helps students make such career changes and to be flexible in a world in which the only constant is continuing change. The Taskforce was concerned that core general education offerings in the state sometimes appear to lack meaning and purpose, resulting in a lack of coherence, integration and structure. The Taskforce also believed that core requirements of general education are fragmented and often lack common elements or unifying integrative themes. And, the Taskforce was concerned that the centrality of the liberal arts as an integral part of the undergraduate experience must be affirmed, and that students and faculty need to focus on what students have in common as inheritors of the Western tradition as well as how they accommodate differences based upon race, ethnicity and gender.

The Taskforce understood that enrollment in general education courses is a state requirement and is built into the state's regulations for licensure and accreditation of undergraduate degree programs. The Taskforce also understood that this requirement exists because the higher education community believes that the value of a college education lies not just in the capacity of institutions to provide knowledge and technical skills in a particular chosen field of study but also in their commitment to encourage civic virtues, strength of character, and ethical standards essential to pursuing honorable lives and honorable careers.

The Taskforce proposed the following statement of principles, which was adopted by the Board of Governors for Higher Education:

#### GENERAL EDUCATION STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

General Education programs in Connecticut should provide a foundation for undergraduate work and life-long learning. Their purpose is to provide informational substance while developing critical perspective and synthesis; to affirm human and intellectual values while liberating the imagination; and to encourage the critical examination of ideas and provide diverse perspectives necessary to such examination, for these are the processes that form the foundation for responsible citizenship and an enlightened culture and society.

General education fulfills these goals by acquainting students with basic knowledge of (a) the past and present diversity of human achievements and perspectives at the levels of individuals, groups, and cultures; (b) how scientific and mathematical inquiry understand nature and enable technological development, and thus shape people's lives by affecting the economic and material frameworks of society; (c) how the arts and humanities foster insights about the human condition and encourage aspirations for the future, and (d) how the social sciences inform us of past efforts and guide future efforts at living together in political, economic, and cultural communities.

Furthermore, general education programs help students develop the cognitive flexibility and the skills necessary to face the changes and challenges of the future, particularly the abilities (a) to express themselves clearly and fully in both speech and writing, and to work collaboratively with others, (b) to reason independently, analytically, and quantitatively, and (c) to utilize informational technology to facilitate research and learning.

These expectations provide institutions great flexibility in their approach to and design of a general education program. Institutions may serve the goals of general education through different sets of requirements and structures specific to their character and mission. Nevertheless, an institution must coherently define how its system of general education articulates these expected skills, knowledge, and abilities and how it will integrate them with one another and within the overall mission and educational philosophy of the institution. General education programs should constitute at least one-third of the undergraduate curriculum, balanced throughout the curriculum via distribution requirements or restricted electives. Institutions must assess their general education programs independently, to assure that they meet these goals separately from the purposes of the major and other elements of the undergraduate degree program.

This is not a final framework for transfer but it is expected to be similar across all of Connecticut public and independent colleges and universities. It is therefore a foundation for appropriate transfer and articulation agreements.

- b) More specifically, does an AA or AS degree from a community college in the state meet general education requirements at public four-year institutions? What mechanisms are in place to make sure this actually happens?

Because the total number of credits in a baccalaureate degree is twice that of an associate's degree, those credits may count toward such requirements as well as toward satisfying electives and other pre-requisite and distributional expectations.

- c) Does credit from transfer courses meet specific course requirements at the transfer institution (e.g. American History counts for American History) or do just the credits transfer to count against the total needed for graduation?

It depends on the course and the institutions involved. The Guaranteed Admission Agreement between the Community Colleges and the University of Connecticut, for example, enables community college students who earn an associate's degree to enter the University of Connecticut's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences as juniors, with all credits being accepted toward the University's baccalaureate degree. The Community College System has similar articulation agreements with the Connecticut State University and with several of the state's independent four-year colleges and universities.

- 7) Are there statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress toward a degree?

No. Connecticut's Alternate Route to Teacher Certification program, which is a post-baccalaureate program for mid-career changers to move into the teaching profession at the middle and high school levels, does provide alternative teacher certification but it does not award a degree.

- 8) Does the state have an easily-accessible state-supported alternative institution that allows students to complete their degrees more quickly or conveniently than through attendance at a traditional public institution?

Charter Oak State College, which was established in 1973 by the Connecticut Legislature, provides an alternative way for adults to earn associate and bachelor's degrees. The College is a distance learning college offering both video and online courses. Students can also earn credits through:

- Courses transferred from other regionally accredited colleges and universities
- Standardized tests (CLEP, DANTES)
- Corporate & agency training programs evaluated by the ACE / PONSI
- Military service schools and occupational ratings evaluated by ACE
- Faculty-evaluated licensures / certifications
- Contract learning (independent study)
- Portfolio assessment (experiential learning)
- Connecticut Credit Assessment Program (CCAP)

Students who matriculate a Charter Oak State College work with an Academic Counselor to create a personalized degree that takes into account their prior college experience, preferred method of earning credits, and future academic goals.

- a) Does the state have an accessible central bank or catalog of on-line courses contributed by many institutions that enable students to do “one-stop shopping” for electronic courses?

Yes. The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium has a website that lists the variety of distance learning opportunities available at public and independent colleges and universities in the state. Most courses can be used to meet degree requirements at a student’s home institution. See [www.ctdlc.org](http://www.ctdlc.org)

- 9) Does the state provide incentives to institutions for improvements in degree production or graduation rates? For minimizing the number of students graduating with excessive numbers of credits (e.g. more than 120 SCH)?

No, though there is an interest in Connecticut in time-to-degree and in efficient use of institutional and student resources.

- 10) Does the state provide incentives for students who successfully complete their degrees (e.g. tuition rebates or cash bonuses)? For students who complete their programs without amassing additional credits (e.g. within 120 SCH)? Are there financial disincentives for students to take more than the number of credits needed to graduate (e.g. full or out-of-state tuition)?

No, the state does not provide incentives for students who successfully complete their degrees, or for completing degree without taking additional credits, nor are there financial disincentives for students taking more than the number of credits needed to graduate.