

# YCCD Intradistrict Course Equivalency Ad Hoc Workgroup Meeting

February 24, 2020  
Columbia College  
10:00 AM – 11:30 PM

**In attendance:** E. Creighton (CC Curriculum Specialist), J. Hughes (MJC Admissions and Records Specialist), L. Michtavy, (CC Registrar), E. Pflieger (CC Articulation Officer), L. Senechal (MJC Articulation Officer)

## Overview

**YCCD Intra-district course equivalence** can be loosely defined as the establishment of course credit reciprocity between MJC and Columbia College courses or sequences. The determination of course equivalence occurs with the mutual agreement of each institution's discipline faculty and is facilitated and managed by the colleges' articulation officers (AOs).

Currently, a course equivalence means that a given course's course outline of record (COR) is believed to have the same rigor, content, and function as another course, in that it can be used to satisfy similar requirements at each institution. Current course equivalence practice allows each college to retain its own course ID (e.g., **CC ENGL 1A = MJC ENGL 101**).

Course equivalence, by this loose definition, should not be conflated with **common course numbering**, which would ask the YCCD colleges to agree on some sort of shared **course numbering system, course numbers, and potentially, course outlines of record for equivalent courses**.

YCCD course equivalencies are published in each college catalog and on an MJC webpage. They are also coded as such, when possible, in Colleague with the intent of streamlining the use of equivalencies on transcripts and degree planning in Starfish (not sure how exactly how equivalencies are used in Starfish but I know it's using them somehow; Julie and Elizabeth?).

## Current Process

Currently, the two colleges initiate and establish course equivalence in the following sequence:

1. A potential course or sequence equivalence is identified by a student, a faculty member, a counselor, AO.
2. The AO works with the other college AO to facilitate discipline faculty review of both colleges' CORs. This process can take days to months to complete.
3. In the event of mutual agreement, a paper equivalence form is signed and stored in paper files which MJC establishes the equivalence, making it active immediately. If there is no agreement, no equivalence is formed.
4. The equivalency is published in the catalogs, on the MJC website, in the Curriculum Management Systems, and coded onto the current course record in the MIS system and is static thereafter.

## Current Context

In recent years, increased interest in streamlining and better supporting the student experience has brought attention to the role of intra-district equivalencies. Additionally, the role of technologies in college operations shed light on how equivalencies – interpreted literally – impact student transcripts when systems apply the logic of equivalency. Ongoing discussion of equivalencies between the two colleges have focused on the following:

### Dimensions of Equivalence

Is equivalence informed by course content alone? For example, can two courses with different unit values or CSU-GE area approvals be equivalent?

A close review of equivalencies by Columbia College in spring of 2018 showed that conflicting “attributes” of equivalent courses can confuse a student’s academic progress. Many **course attributes** impact if/how a student satisfies curricular requirements.

| <b>Course Attribute</b> | <b>Considerations</b>  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Unit Value</b>       | <p><i>Unit values in aggregate can affect whether a student satisfies unit requirements for associate degree or a certificate, whether a course can be approved for UC transferability, C-ID or an articulation agreement. Equivalency programming in district systems will plug in equivalent courses to satisfy requirements interchangeably, even when units differ. Are we ok with that?</i></p>   |
| <b>Rigor</b>            | <p><i>Course rigor, which is partly informed by the rules of rigor associated with the college’s course numbering system, also show what facet of the CCC mission a given course fulfills.</i></p> <p><i>If courses deemed as equivalent do not have the same degree of academic rigor when applied to the student’s degree, can they truly be considered equivalent?</i></p> <p><b>Types of Rigor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Associate Degree Rigor</b> means that the units apply to the 60 degrees required for associate degree, but it does not guarantee baccalaureate degree rigor.</li> <li>• <b>CSU Baccalaureate Elective Unit Rigor or “CSU Transferable”</b> is locally determined when a course number is assigned. If one course is deemed by its campus to be baccalaureate in rigor and the other is not, are they truly equivalent? It is the first step to pursuing CSU articulation.</li> <li>• <b>UC Baccalaureate Elective Unit Rigor or “UC Transferable”</b> requires approval by the UC system and means that a student can transfer the course to UC and apply credits toward the 120 units for baccalaureate degree. If <i>one</i> of the equivalent courses/sequences is not accepted by UC as elective units when the other is, are they equivalent? It is the first step to establishing UC articulation.</li> </ul> |



### ***Periodic review***

Unlike Title 5 curriculum review process which obliges the college faculty to review curriculum every 6 years, the YCCD equivalencies are intact and “dormant” over time until courses are inactivated/discontinued or one of the colleges decides to remove the equivalency.

But courses can and do change over time at each campus, resulting in “curricular drift”. Unit values change, content changes, prerequisites change, GE approvals change. There is no process in place obliging the colleges to periodically review an equivalency to ensure the courses remain truly equivalent, which can have unintended consequences for students.

### ***Technology***

While course equivalence is determined by faculty, it is operationalized by staff and programming rules that incorporate the equivalence on student transcripts.

Currently, our primary MIS system (Ellucian Colleague) and our recently implemented (and student-facing) Starfish must share data, programming, and “talk” to each other.

Unfortunately, it is unclear to stakeholders how those data mechanics work. Especially when considering how the logic works within each system. For example, how is it that a Columbia student’s *in-residency* units show as belonging to Modesto in Starfish? When the colleges began using the Colleague equate feature to operationalize Intra-district equivalencies, transcript implications were not fully understood, leaving wide berth for inaccuracies on transcripts. Currently, both Curriculum Specialists are unclear how changes to equates on one campus affect their college or the other, and a request for assistance from Ellucian has been pending since Summer 2019.

There are many unknowns like this that pop up and challenge our understanding of how things work inside the tools. Do we know how these technologies talk to each other, or why programming ripples out in certain ways on transcripts or systems? Have we consulted experts or invested in training the stakeholders on this functionality?

## **Summary**

The workgroup strongly values maximizing and ensuring the availability of curricular equivalencies for YCCD students. And in the interest of better supporting the student experience, it equally values the short and long-term integrity of those equivalencies in terms of content, functionality, and student records and transfer.

As such, the workgroup advises the YCCD to intentionally invest in improving processes, systems, and staff development surrounding this desired outcome, as it is *foundational* to any meaningful progress on streamlining intra-district movement for our students.

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