

This memo is in response to statements made and actions taken at the June 22, 2023, Board of Trustees meeting regarding Item 10C: [Notation of Cantonese Credit Certificate in 2023-24 Catalog](#).

Background

It must be made clear, again, that all are in favor of expanding Cantonese offerings and that there is a clear need for more Cantonese, especially in the Bay Area. The World Languages Department's reality, however, has been that with a slashed budget and one part-time instructor, who has not been writing curriculum, they have barely had the resources to offer their only Cantonese courses, 10A-D, all of which are conversational, and 10D is not offered regularly. Based on that curricular and resource reality, as well as concerns about the vulnerability of standalone courses in light of changing statewide emphases on student success and program completion formulas, a Conversational Cantonese Certificate of Achievement was created and approved by the Curriculum Committee on September 28, 2022. It was later indexed by the State Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) and, as a result of receiving all levels of local and state approval, it is in the fall catalog and should be publicized widely.

There was great pressure from Trustee Wong through the media and the rallying of community members to also create a larger Cantonese certificate, comparable to what's offered in Mandarin. The department very ambivalently brought a version to the Curriculum Committee on October 12, 2022. A number of the course choices were Mandarin and questioned by the committee. It was approved with the stipulations that courses be changed so that it's more of a Cantonese certificate less dependent on Mandarin and more distinct from the already approved 9-unit conversational certificate. The department could not meet those stipulations and after a few weeks of struggle admitted that they felt pressured and bullied into presenting something, anything, and felt that the previously proposed version was inappropriate to offer students. While the department was struggling with meeting the stipulations and dealing with Board pressure, the Office of Instruction, due to a past practice to improve expediency—a practice that will no longer occur—included this item on the November 10, 2022, Board Agenda under the assumption that the stipulations for approval would eventually be met. The World Languages Department chair was horrified when she saw this program on the Board's agenda, as was the Curriculum Committee Chair. It should not have been there without full approval. World Languages simply did not have the resources or appropriate courses to offer such a certificate, so they withdrew this proposal, which they felt forced to create, and the Curriculum Committee never approved it. Although World Languages hopes to offer a larger Cantonese certificate in the future, they simply do not have the courses or faculty to offer such a certificate this year. This is just a CCSF reality.

As a result of this history and conflicts over proper curriculum procedure, there were several disturbing occurrences at the June 22 Board of Trustees meeting.

1) Faculty were called "liars" for citing Title 5 and specifically the CCCCCO's [Program and Course Approval Handbook](#) (aka the PCAH), which on page 23 states explicitly that curriculum items not authorized and indexed by the State Chancellor's Office may not be publicized:

Once a course or program has gone through the above [chaptering] process and has received a control number, the college is then authorized to:

- Publish the description of a new program or course in the catalog or publicize a new program or course in other ways (CCR., Title 5, § 55005).

Faculty were not lying, and Trustee Murrell should apologize for his heated, slanderous words. He not only referred to faculty who spoke on 6/22 as liars but made a generalization about faculty as liars at past meetings. His outburst seemed to have been triggered by the lawyer's questionable opinion that an asterisk note in the catalog is not a form of publicity—even though a catalog, any catalog, by definition, is a publicity object. Additionally, a college catalog is a contract of sorts. Since 6/22, the unauthorized “16-unit certificate” has also been publicized on social media, such as Facebook, among other media outlets. While arguing the publicity violation, faculty on 6/22 and at the March BoT meeting referred to the Program and Course Approval Handbook, cited above, which is not only based on Title 5 but an extension of Title 5. (See Section [55000.5](#).) The PCAH is a very serious document. Perhaps the use of “Handbook” in its title detracts from some of the seriousness of its guidelines. The CCCCCO sure takes it seriously, and the rule against publicizing courses and programs that have not been fully chaptered is reinforced annually at the Curriculum Institute. This is common knowledge among curriculum officials.

In fact, CCSF has several new curriculum items that did not reach the CCCCCO in time to be included in the 2023-24 catalog or even be allowed to be publicized, say for spring '24. Publicizing them would be a violation. In the case of publicizing the “16-unit” Cantonese Certificate—which, by the way, has never been 16 units—we're not dealing with a certificate that simply needs CCCCCO indexing before it can be promoted and offered; we're dealing with a certificate that does not exist because the courses necessary to make it a meaningful program do not exist. The department withdrew the proposal so that it could develop Cantonese writing and reading courses instead of relying on Mandarin courses to make up the units in the program. Otherwise, it would be like creating an Italian certificate but allowing Spanish courses to satisfy the requirements because they're both Romance languages and the school doesn't have the Italian courses or the budget to have enough Italian faculty. Please note again that the World Languages Department has only had four Cantonese courses, 10A-D, all conversational, for decades. There is also only one part-time instructor, and that teacher has not been writing course or program outlines. It was only this year that funding (.2) was approved to hire a second part-time teacher with the hope that this new hire will help write Cantonese course outlines. This is also noted in the [Curriculum Committee's 11/23/22 minutes](#).

Why CCSF's retained attorney said that including an asterisk note about the larger Cantonese program—which has not been indexed by the CCCCCO and does not even exist except in Trustee Wong's media packages—doesn't fall under the category of “publicize” is very strange, questionable opinion. How could that not be considered a form of publicizing? Moreover, continuously going to the media for the past two years instead of sincerely supporting CCSF's internal curriculum processes has itself been a form of publicity.

Indeed, Dean Raul Arambula, the CCCCCO Dean of Educational Services and Support, as well as other State officials, have agreed that this interpretation by board members and the retained lawyer is incorrect and goes against the PCAH, Title 5, and the validity of the PCAH being an extension of Title 5.

2) Trustee Wong repeatedly claimed that the larger Cantonese certificate was approved because it was listed as “approved with stipulations.” When an item is approved with stipulations, that means it has been partially approved and changes are needed. It would be very surprising if Trustee Wong really doesn't know the difference, yet on 6/22 he repeatedly acted as if “approved with stipulations” means an item has been fully approved. The proposal has not been rejected, but it also hasn't been approved because conditions have been imposed. It was very troubling to hear the repeated conflation of “approved with stipulations” and “approved.” Repeating that will not make it true.

Again, the Board should never have received the larger certificate on its list of approved items because the department not only didn't address the stipulations, they withdrew the certificate, as explained above. This could have been explained formally to the Board during the November 10, 2022, meeting when the curriculum item came up for consideration so that an amended item that omitted this certificate but retained the other items that had been passed by the Curriculum Committee could be adopted by the Board. Based on what happened on 6/22, such a formal explanation and withdrawal might not have mattered anyway because the Board had it on its approved list, regardless of the department's position or the non-existence of the certificate. And such a formal withdrawal likely would have been rejected by at least some board members because of the media messages that had already gone out to the community far too prematurely. That is another reason why curriculum is under faculty purview, not district governing board purview, and should focus on internal, not external processes.

To be clear, the Office of Instruction has in the past forwarded items that still needed to address stipulations because it's already a slow approval process since the board meets just once a month. This is part of why it takes two semesters to handle local and state approvals. That practice will no longer happen. Now it will be a little slower but cleaner. The Office of Instruction has adjusted the staff workflow in CQnet so that proposals still needing to address stipulations will not be mixed in with items that have full approval. In the past, some items that still needed to address stipulations reached the Board's approval list, but that wasn't much of an issue because, again, there was mutual trust and respect for the curriculum process. The actions of some current board members have damaged that trusted relationship and violated the program approval process. There was an understanding that a curriculum item is not official until it has state approval anyway. And in the past, out of respect for the completion of local and state processes, media activities were not being staged in conjunction with Board votes on curriculum matters.

Office of Instruction practices have already been modified and very intentionally reflect what's called for in the Academic Senate's recent [Resolution 2023.04.12.7A Observe 10+1 and AB1725 In Regard to the Progress Toward Development of the Cantonese Certificate](#), which the Board should respect as well.

3) Publicizing an unapproved course, degree, or certificate in the catalog not only violates CCCCCO guidelines driven by Title 5 and the Board's own policy, [BP 6.03](#), it also sets a horrible precedent in terms of how curriculum is documented. A number of departments have talked about creating various programs but would never even consider publicizing those aspirations in the catalog or even on their websites because they have not been drafted, completed, or chaptered. Sure it might draw student interest, but that would be unethical and, we believe, unlawful, because they do not exist. Again, even courses and programs that have reached the CCCCCO's queue for state approval but had not been chaptered in time to meet catalog deadlines do not appear in the catalog. A number of years ago CCSF used to include a note in the catalog with courses and programs that had been approved locally but were still pending CCCCCO approval. That practice ended because it violates CCCCCO guidelines and could trigger a number of articulation issues, as a college catalog is essentially a legal contract. Similarly, departments have been asked to remove flyers that publicize a new course or program that they're excited about but have not yet received CCCCCO approval. Publicizing the fully chaptered 9-unit Conversational Cantonese certificate would be wonderful, but making a catalog note exception for a second Cantonese program that does not yet exist, as well as publicizing that note in the media, is a terrible mistake.

4) The trustees seem to need a much stronger understanding of 10+1 and the curriculum process. There was a lot of confusion at the 6/22/23 meeting. And part of why there was confusion is because curriculum is under faculty purview; there's a reason why curriculum is not board terrain. Faculty would be happy to educate trustees on curriculum processes. Here, for example, are the [2022](#) and [2023](#) slideshows used in Curriculum

Committee training. Enjoy. If trustees, as representatives of the community, see the need for a new course or program, they should communicate that to the Chancellor, who can then bring that idea to Academic Affairs to share with faculty and departments. Going to the media first, as Trustee Wong has done for two years, is the opposite of what a trustee should do, which is part of why Board members must stay out of curriculum and respect faculty purview and CCCCCO processes. Essentially, Trustee Wong, through media and community manipulation, has manufactured a certificate that does not exist. That, in turn, spilled into World Languages Department manipulation—and for those same two years the department has been slashed and has had just one part-time teacher of Cantonese. Media and political pressure forced the department to make a certificate that would have been unfair to students because it was heavily Mandarin and was not yet a good Cantonese certificate. Everybody wants more Cantonese offerings, but there is a right way to make that happen. Orchestrating media events to manufacture a certificate that lacks appropriate courses and resources is not the right way.

And the issue of publicizing a program did not just begin with the recent push to include aspirational catalog language; it really began two years ago by using the media and other external processes instead of CCSF's internal processes for supporting and developing curriculum. And here we are.

And the consequences thus far have been community confusion, the shaming and exhaustion of faculty, and the loss of a great amount of time and energy that could have been used much more productively.

Conclusion

The Board of Trustees must abide by 10+1, Title 5, the PCAH, and CCSF's own policies before more damage is done to the institution and there are further consequences.

This response to the Board of Trustees has been read and endorsed by the Curriculum Committee, Academic Senate, Department Chair Council, and World Languages and Cultures Department.

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