MAJORS
Background: As of July 1, 2015, the HECC (Higher Education Coordinating Commission) removed a restriction on the designation of major or areas of study in Oregon community college degrees other than the AAS.

So the question this work group was asked to answer is: Given that we may now award majors, should PCC do so?

Rule Caption: Removes restriction on the designation of major or areas of study in community college programs.

Charge: The Degrees and Certificates Committee will develop a Work Group to coordinate discussion of the utility and possible design parameters of majors in the transfer degrees at PCC. The Work Group should include a few standing committee members, with some additional members from faculty, advisors, administration and students. This group will review guidelines provided by the state agencies (CCWD, HECC); transfer requirements, policies, and trends at four-year institutions across the state; models for community college majors utilized in other states; and other relevant data. In addition, the Work Group will convene broad-based discussions with faculty, staff, and students across the college, including open discussions and conversations at relevant committees and standing meetings such as (but not limited to) the EAC, CC, ASAC, CIC, Strategic Planning Council, Advising Council, etc.

Guiding questions for inquiry and discussion will include:
What is the purpose of a major at a community college? What should majors do for PCC students intending to transfer to 4-year degree programs?
How should PCC design majors for transfer degrees?

The Work Group will review and assess the information and feedback gathered through this process and make recommendations to the full Degrees and Certificates Committee no later than the end of
Majors –

Defined

- For purposes of this discussion, a major is defined as an academic focus or emphasis, consisting of required coursework, defined in the catalog and *transcripted* and awarded within one or more of the following degrees: AS, AAOT, or AGS.
Guided Pathways without *transcripted* Majors! There are examples of Guided Pathways with Meta-Majors, so this is a possible consideration as well.
Majors – possible benefits

- Give students a sense of direction, belonging and a way toward an end result (4-year major & career focus)
- Provide an “academic home” and connection to faculty and like-minded students.
- Increase success & retention by facilitating a cohort feel
- Increase access to student supports, services and faculty mentorship
- On a systems level, we could better ID and target services such as transfer advising and guidance to/for students
- Provide a reality check on a particular major or career (along the lines of “try before you buy”) & PCC can connect students to industry better than most 4-year schools!

SUPPORT TO BULLETS #2-4


http://www.atlantic.edu/program/academic/mcarthur/faculty_based_advising.htm


http://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/he_diss/23/
Majors —

*Should*

- First do **NO HARM** to students
- Help students **succeed**
- Be simple enough to be both **useful & used** by students
- NOT add to a student’s course credit load or financial debt
- Be **flexible** and be **compatible** with all or most degree options (AS, AAOT, or AGS), so that a student can combine a major focus with the degree that otherwise best serves the student’s needs.
Majors –
At 2-year schools nationwide

• There is a common belief that students who self-identify as “X-Major” early in their college career have greater persistence, transfer, completion and success than students who do not declare a major early in their career due to students taking ownership of their education and connecting with a community of faculty and likeminded students centered about their major.

• There are a limited number of studies documenting greater persistence, completion, transfer and student success due to students having majors.

SUPPORT TO BULLET #2

The most compelling gains in student completion are seen at schools that have embraced the Guided Pathway model. There seem to be multiple sources that suggest that having a commitment to educational and career goals contributes to persistence, not the major itself, which suggests that significant support in defining educational and career goals is the magic ingredient.


Majors –
At 2-year schools nationwide

- Most U.S. community colleges have majors.
- Based on 2014 data on Completion Rates at 2-Year Schools:
  - OR 35.6% (no majors);
  - WA: 48.1%, (new major related pathways),
  - CA: 39.0% (majors),
  - ID: 35.5% (majors),
  - National range: 53.6% - 14.1%.
- This state level data gives no clear guidance to the utility of majors as educational infrastructure, educational spending and the student population’s socio-economic context also impact student retention, transfer, completion, and success.

SOURCE BULLET #2
http://www.collegemeasures.org/2-year_colleges/home/
Majors –
Transferring to 4-year schools

• It is REALLY challenging to design majors which would guarantee “Junior” standing within a specific major across multiple specific 4-year institutions.

• For Example: Lower division requirements for students wanting to major in Biology at OSU are not the same as those wanting to major in Biology at WOU or UO or PSU; thus a PCC “major” in Biology could include some core courses which are compatible with all or most destination institutions, but students would still need to select some courses specific to their transfer institution.
Majors –
Transferring to 4-year schools

• Creating separate *transcripted* versions of each major for each transfer institution (e.g. Biology-PSU, Biology-OSU, Biology-UO, Biology-WOU, Biology-EOU) would be logistically challenging to both create and maintain, and could create barriers to completion.

• PCC already recognizes and maintains many Articulation Agreements and Transfer Guides.
Majors –
Transferring to 4-year schools

- Students must take a minimum number of upper level credits to meet 4-year degree/graduation requirements
- Additional/extra lower level course work in a discipline will generally transfer as electives and not as the specific course requirements of a 4-year major (leading to wasted credits/increased debt)
- Generally, Community Colleges are prohibited from teaching 300 and 400 level courses
Majors –
@ 4-year schools

• Humanities Majors (generally)
  • First 2 years – very few specific requirements – usually General Education
  • Final 2 years – upper level course work in discipline – usually required # of 300-400 level courses

• STEM Majors (generally)
  • First 2 years – math, science requirements – and General Education
  • Final 2 years – upper level course work in discipline
Majors Work Group Summary

- Creating majors that ensure “Junior” standing within the major at multiple transfer institutions is problematic.
- The link between majors and increased completion has limited documentation.
- Many of the possible benefits of majors might equally well or more efficiently be met by other means (improved advising, faculty advising, greater student belonging, increased student support, general education reform, guided pathways, etc.).
- Design of majors should only occur after PCC resolves the ongoing inquiries into redesigning core outcomes, redesigning general education, advising review, and adopting a pathways model or not.
- Creating majors will require resources (staff and faculty time, systems, restructuring, advising, etc.) and so the college as a whole needs to look at all those pieces together.
- Therefore, the Majors Work Group feels it is premature to move forward with implementing majors until the above points are resolved.
BIG THANKS!
for all of the time, energy, assistance & input from all who participated in the Majors Work Group throughout the year!

Arlene McCashew  Gene Flores  Jessica Morfin
Emiliano Vega  Sally Earl  Kendra Cawley
Eriks Puris  Usha Ramanujam  Anne Haberkern
Rachel Bridgewater  Sasha Grenier  Janeen Hull
Lucinda Eshleman  Phil Christain  Linda Fergusson-Kolmes
Jeremy Estrella  Ericka Goerling
Meredith Farkas  Jon Kloetzli
Emily Biskay  Mike Farrell