Promising State Articulation and Transfer Policies

INCREASING ACCESS THROUGH TRANSFER CONFERENCE

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
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Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)

- **What WICHE Does:** Works with its 15 member states (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, ND, NM, NV, OR, SD, UT, WA, WY) to promote access and excellence in higher education for all citizens of the West.

- **How WICHE Accomplishes This:** By promoting innovation and efficiency through interstate collaboration.

- **Why WICHE Does This:** To advance the region’s economic, social, and civic life.
Transfer and Articulation: A Clarification

- **Transfer:** Process of moving a student’s credits across different institutions.

- **Articulation:** The institutional policies or other structures that are implemented to encourage, facilitate and monitor the student transfer process.

“The difference between the two terms is perhaps most easily perceived as one between the ‘who’ and the ‘what’.” - Ignash and Townsend (2000)
What Constitutes a Strong Articulation Agreement?

- Associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions are **equal partners** in providing the first two years of baccalaureate degree programs.
- Transfer students should be **treated comparably** to ‘native’ students by the receiving institutions.
- Faculty from both the two-year and four-year institutions have **primary responsibility** for developing and maintaining statewide articulation agreements.

What Constitutes a Strong Articulation Agreement?

- Statewide articulation agreements should accommodate those students who complete a significant block of coursework (such as the general education requirements) but who transfer before completing the associate degree.
- Articulation agreements should be developed for specific program majors.
- A state’s private institutions should be included in statewide articulation agreements.
- A statewide evaluation system should monitor the progress and completion of transfer students.

But there’s more...

It should be **student-centered**...

- Clear, transparent, and easy to understand
- People need to know about it (i.e., students, advisors, parents, and others)
- Minimize the number of unnecessary credits that students earn on the way to earning their degrees
Challenging, but Not Impossible

- Governance of a statewide approach
- Faculty autonomy
- Level of standardization across institutions
- Whether and how lower division major preparation requirements should be integrated with general education requirements
- When transfer students should declare a major
- How to encourage students to transfer and earn degrees in majors related to high-need areas
- How to design advising tools and support services to help students navigate the transfer process

But it’s worth it...

- Your students want to succeed, and they need to do it efficiently.
- Your institutions need to graduate more students.
- Your state must generate more degrees to compete economically.
- If you don’t do it, your state legislature just might...
Enrollment Trends

- 60% of all students attend more than one college or university.
- In Fall 2006:
  - 6.2 million students were enrolled in community colleges.
  - 35% of all postsecondary students were enrolled in community colleges (National Center for Education Statistics).
- Community college students persist and complete bachelor’s degrees at lower rates (17%) than students who begin their studies at four-year public colleges and universities (45%) (Community Colleges: Special Supplement to the Condition of Education 2008 report).
- In a winter 2009 survey of 120 community college presidents, 71% reported headcount growth of 5% or more over previous year (League for Innovation in the Community College).
General Trends in the States

- Institution-to-institution articulation agreements to manage transfer processes.
- Two general approaches:
  - Associate transfer degree (or set of degrees)
    - Florida
    - Arizona
    - Washington
    - Arkansas (2009)
  - Common statewide general education curriculum
    - Texas
    - Ohio
- Few state financial aid programs deliberately incentivize transfer.
  - Arizona
  - Texas
- Reliance on websites to disseminate information.
Everyone looks to Florida...with good reason

- Statewide articulation agreement - Students who have earned associate’s degrees are granted admission to any state university as juniors and are admitted to a degree program.
- Statewide course numbering system.
- Statewide general education core, common to all institutions.
Florida

- Common core also adopted by many private colleges and universities.
- Common prerequisite list for each degree program, which includes courses that count toward the degree as well as any prerequisites for admission into the program. These courses are listed in the Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students (FACTS), a statewide electronic catalogue.
Florida – Measures of Effectiveness

- Admission rate to state universities is higher for students with an AA degree (76%) than for freshman applicants (57%).
- AA transfer students in public universities graduate with a similar number of total credits (138) as native freshmen (135).
Arizona

- Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC).
  - Consists of a minimum of 35 semester units of lower-division general education coursework.
  - Three different pathways: arts, science, and business

- Transfer Pathways correspond with each AGEC option.

- Completing AGEC guarantees admission and completion of general education core.

- Completing a transfer associate degree (AGEC plus Transfer Pathway) guarantees junior status, application of pathway credits to the major, and competitiveness for admission to the programs.

- Arizona Transfer Website has tools to help students navigate the transfer process.
Arizona – Measures of Effectiveness

- Policy changes had resulted in transfer students completing the bachelor’s degree with nearly one semester less credit than was the case five years earlier.
- Students transferring after meeting AGEC requirements (with or without completing an associate’s degree) were more likely to graduate within a specified time period than students transferring with community college credits but without having followed a specified transfer pathway.
- Those completing AGEC graduated with fewer total credits.
Several transfer degree options:
- Associate of Science – Transfer Degree (AS-T)
- Direct Transfer Agreement Associate Degree (DTA)
- Applied Associate of Science in Technology (for transfer to Bachelor of Applied Science)

Completing degree gives priority consideration in admission to public universities.
Currently, no comprehensive website for transfer information, but an Academic Guidance and Planning System (Academic GPS) is under development.
Students earning the AS-T transfer to a university at a higher rate, complete fewer credits to degree, and are more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree than students who follow the more general Direct Transfer Agreement with a science-related concentration.

Three-year graduation rate for students transferring to a Washington public university with an associate degree has improved from 63% in the late 1990s to 71% in 2006-07.
Arkansas

- **Act 672 (2005)** - The Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS) simplified the transfer of courses among Arkansas's public colleges and universities with a statewide comprehensive transfer policy.
  - Freshman and sophomore general education courses shall be accepted for full credit in their areas of emphases at all public colleges and universities in Arkansas.
  - The courses included in ACTS are for transfer purposes and establish the minimum course requirements for transferability.
  - College and universities are able to submit syllabi at designated deadlines each year to be considered for inclusion in ACTS.
  - ACTS has had over 200,000 hits on its site since 2007.
Arkansas

- **Act 182 (passed in 2009) – Roger Phillips Transfer Policy Act**
  - Designates AA, AS, and AAT as statewide transfer degrees.
  - Requires institutions to accept the degrees without additional general education hours.
Arkansas – Measures of Effectiveness

- In 2008, 7% of 18,926 students transferred (about 1,325) – almost the same percentage every year since 1992.
- Policy goes into effect in 2010, so no data yet on the new law.
Texas

- Legislature mandated statewide core curriculum for all public institutions (1987).
- Core includes 36 semester units of GE and additional units for field of study curriculum or electives (11 offered in high-demand majors).
- Institutions may add requirements to the core.
- Completing the core and field of study curriculum guarantees acceptance of units, but not admission.
- Associate of Arts in Teaching is the only transfer degree.
- Common course numbering system in lower division.
- College for All Texans website offers some guidance but no comprehensive transfer site exists.
For Policy Consideration

- Conduct a statewide policy and practice audit.
- Ensure that your transfer policy is student-centered, not just state- or institution-centered.
  - What about the students who don’t complete the entire associate’s degree?
- Consider targeting financial aid to encourage transfer.
- How well does your state’s transfer policy work for non-traditional students?
  - How does credit for prior learning transfer?
- Does your state effectively use technology to make the transfer process easier for students?
Transfer Resources and Sources

- National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN)  
  - www.natn.org
Transfer Resources and Sources

- State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO)
  - [http://www.wiche.edu/spido](http://www.wiche.edu/spido)
For More Information

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