



BACKGROUND BRIEF – STUDENT TRANSFER

Oregon Transfer

Rates of baccalaureate degree completion and time to completion vary between community college transfer students and students who began post-secondary education at a four-year public university. In Oregon, 62.4 percent of transfer students who transferred to a public university with at least 24-36 transferred credits complete a BA within four years of transfer. For the most similar population of first-time university students – those who successfully completed two years of university – the six-year graduation rate is 82.4 percent. Furthermore, 63 percent of Oregon transfer students enter universities with fewer credits than they had earned at community colleges and 35 percent lose more than one term of coursework.¹

Oregon has instituted several transfer degrees and modules during recent decades, including the 90-credit Associate of Art Oregon Transfer (AAOT), 45-credit Oregon Transfer Module (OTM), and Associate of Science Oregon Transfer (ASOT). In addition, many institutions have developed articulated agreements to facilitate successful credit transfer. The Legislature passed a “Transfer Student Bill of Rights” in 2011, establishing methods to resolve credit transfer issues, which induces the development of uniform, statewide credit transfer pathways. Transfer students often find that while their transfer degree helps them meet the admission standard of the receiving university, their general education and major course of study credits are accepted only on a course-by-course, institution-by-institution basis.

House Bill 2998 attempts to mitigate credit loss by requiring community colleges and public universities to establish foundational curricula and statewide transfer agreements to align pathways for community college students in Oregon as they transfer to an in-state, public university. In order to build toward a seamless transfer system, HB 2998 requires the HECC to convene community colleges and universities to advance three legislative requirements:

1. Develop one or more foundational curricula of at least 30 college-level credits, common across Oregon public colleges and universities, that allow community college students who complete such curricula to count each academic credit from such curricula toward their degree requirements at any public university;
2. Provide input to HECC staff on policy and data questions for a report to the Legislative Assembly, including defining “lost academic credit,” recommending the number of foundational curricula and how they will transfer within and across sectors, and determining the criteria for identifying the prioritized majors for unified state transfer agreements (USTA) to be developed.
3. Generate a USTA for each major course of study that provides a path for community college students to transfer to any public university with the optimal number of academic credits to complete the degree on-time, without loss of academic credit or requirement to retake a course.

Many community college students face numerous personal and structural barriers to transfer, including financial concerns, limited information, and the lack of coordination between 2-year

¹ Higher Education Coordinating Commission. 2017. *Improving Transfer Pathways in Oregon*. Slides 9-11.

and 4-year institutions. Through the work of the HECC, we will be focusing the bulk of our analysis on improving coordination between Oregon’s 2-and-4 year institutions. A coordinated credit transfer system is an essential part of creating a more affordable, efficient, and equitable higher education system for our transfer students— students who tend to be first generation, rural, students of color, and/or working parents.²

While HB 2998 demands specific deliverables, it does not grant new authority to HECC, remove faculty control of curriculum, or mandate statewide curricula. Instead, it directs the HECC to convene workgroups with a guiding principle of faculty autonomy over faculty work, building upon 30 years of a coordinated effort to streamline transfer processes in Oregon.

The National Landscape

Clear and consistent transfer policies are necessary to ease the process for students and create partnerships between post-secondary institutions. Studies have shown that many students lose credits or have to re-take courses after they complete the transfer process.³ In an effort to decrease credit loss, statewide transfer degrees provide consistency across public intuitions and systems in the state. Transfer policies across the nation reflect a spectrum of diverse ideas and policy tools used to facilitate these pathways, including common course numbering, reverse transfer, common core curriculum, guaranteed transfer, statewide transfer and other avenues to create unified transitions for students in Oregon. According to the Education Commission of the States, 36 states have a transferable core of lower-division courses, 16 states have a statewide common course numbering system, 31 states have statewide guaranteed transfer of an associate’s degree, and 15 states have enacted statewide reverse transfer legislation.⁴ As states work toward higher-education attainment goals, Oregon can assess national trends – including transfer policies – to ensure we provide the most successful tools to assist students along their journey from matriculation to degree completion.

² Pazich, Loni Bordoloi and Estela Bensimon. 2010. Wisconsin Transfer Equity Study: Final Report. Center for Urban Education, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California. Lose Angeles: Research Report.

³ Monaghan, David B. and Paul Attewell. 2014. “*The Community College Route to the Bachelor’s Degree.*” Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis: 1-22.

⁴ “Transfer and Articulation – All State Profiles,” (April, 2016). Retrieved from <http://ecs.force.com/mbdata/mbprofallrta?Rep=TA16STA> (Oct. 3, 2017)