Materials for the
PEAQ Evaluation Process

Materials to be Prepared and Distributed by the Organization

The organization prepares
☐ the appropriate self-study report
☐ audited financial statements for the two most recently completed fiscal years
☐ current copies of all organizational catalog(s) or course bulletins
☐ faculty, staff, and student handbooks

Six to eight weeks prior to the visit, the organization sends
☐ one set of materials to the Commission staff liaison
☐ one set of materials to each member of the evaluation team

Following the visit, the organization sends its response to the team report to the Commission staff liaison and to each team member. If appropriate, the organization includes its choice for the review process.

Upon receipt of the names of the reviewers, the organization sends each reviewer the materials prepared for the visit and its response to the team report. The organization will need
☐ two sets of materials for a Readers' Panel
☐ up to ten sets of materials for a Review Committee (should the situation require)

The organization should produce additional sets of materials for its own use.

Materials to be Available to the Team during the Visit

Materials to be placed in a Resource Room established by the organization on the campus
☐ minutes of major organizational committees, including self-study committee
☐ reports referenced in the self-study report or used by working committees
☐ policies and procedures related to curriculum adoption, review, and evaluation
☐ policies on learning resources, including libraries, and formal agreements for the shared use of learning resources
☐ policies on interaction with other academic organizations and programs

Materials for the Resource Room – continued on next page
Materials for the Resource Room – continued

☐ policies for allocation and use of computer resources
☐ budgets and expenditure reports for units, programs, and the organization as a whole, and the organizational audits, at least for the prior five years
☐ physical facilities master plan
☐ maintenance plans
☐ catalogs, bulletins, viewbooks, and other promotional literature
☐ academic admission, good standing, and completion policies
☐ policies related to the employment, orientation, supervision, and evaluation of full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and teaching assistants
☐ faculty, student, and staff handbooks
☐ bylaws of faculty and staff assemblies or other representative bodies
☐ governance documents: charter, bylaws, policies, membership, minutes, reports
☐ a complete roster of all faculty members (full- and part-time) and their teaching assignments during the current academic term
☐ formal agreements for all consortia or contractual relationships
☐ student service policies (residence, governance, health, financial aid, student records), and the refund policy
☐ board rosters, charters, and bylaws, including those of separately incorporated entities (e.g., research, development, foundation, alumni associations, or athletic corporations)
☐ reports from other agencies or accrediting bodies
☐ documents concerning Title III compliance and recertification
☐ third party comment notices

Commission Materials for the Evaluation Process

The Commission sends the organization and each team member

☐ the Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet
☐ the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status and the Organizational Profile
☐ the most recent Institutional Annual Report (Operational Indicators)
☐ the official record of the most recent comprehensive visit
☐ the official record of any focused visits that have taken place and/or institutional changes approved since the last comprehensive evaluation
toward these constituencies. Perhaps the constituencies most talked about are elementary and secondary education systems. From those systems come students for our colleges and universities; from our colleges and universities come the teachers for those systems. More and more high school graduates believe that college is necessary for their future success, and increasing numbers of them matriculate. The lack of fit is evident as developmental courses balloon in numbers and enrollments and as course and degree completion rates stagnate. Responsibility for this must be shared, and many colleges are helping high schools in their region bring their students to mutually accepted standards of performance.

In many rural sections of the North Central region, communities have come to depend on a single college, or two or three reasonably closely located institutions, for educational services. The willingness of those institutions to collaborate to create seamless pathways for many kinds of learners is strong evidence of engagement and service. Sometimes the collaboration must involve local business or industry as the best partner, while at other times the most effective partner could be a college hundreds of miles away that is willing to collaborate in creating programs needed by the community. Participating in the creation of multiorganizational higher learning centers is a good example of responding to educational needs by drawing on the strengths of several different colleges and universities.

In our urban areas, many colleges find their constituencies shifting simply because the demographics of the local population shifts. Suddenly there might be a major demand for educational services that, by mission and commitment, they want to provide, but that they are ill-equipped to handle. It is a testimony to engagement when such colleges show creativity in effectively compensating for their lack of preparedness.

The Commission does not dictate organizational policies and procedures for accepting transfer credits, but it holds that good practice requires the consideration of more than the source of the accreditation of a sending program or institution. The team will review the organization’s transfer of credit policies as a part of its visit. The Commission encourages organizations to review transfer policies and procedures periodically to ensure clarity for those who administer them, for the students who follow them, and for employers and other stakeholders who refer to them, as well as the consistency of their interpretation and application throughout the institution. The organization should also consider whether its policies and procedures are responsive to new types of learning opportunities outside institutions of higher education.

**Examples of Evidence**

As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

- Collaborative ventures exist with other higher learning organizations and education sectors (e.g., K-12 partnerships, articulation arrangements, 2+2 programs).
- The organization’s transfer policies and practices create an environment supportive of the mobility of learners.
- Community leaders testify to the usefulness of the organization’s programs of engagement.
- The organization’s programs of engagement give evidence of building effective bridges among diverse communities.
- The organization participates in partnerships focused on shared educational, economic, and social goals.
- The organization’s partnerships and contractual arrangements uphold the organization’s integrity.

**Criterion Five: Core Component 5d**

Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

This Core Component calls for evaluation, but it sets the measure of usefulness and effectiveness of service as the value external and internal constituencies find in it. Perhaps being able to attend an organization’s theater productions or to participate in forums and workshops on health care, child care, gerontology, tax filing, drug dependency, and welfare benefits are of value to members of the community. Moreover, the organization or members in it should also find value in extending these opportunities. While the numbers of partners might testify to the value the external community places in an organization’s service learning programs, it is important to know whether students and faculty value the learning achieved through those programs. Sometimes the measures of values differ.
• The organization's commitments are shaped by its mission and its capacity to support those commitments.
• The organization practices periodic environmental scanning to understand the changing needs of its constituencies and their communities.
• The organization demonstrates attention to the diversity of the constituencies it serves.
• The organization's outreach programs respond to identified community needs.
• In responding to external constituencies, the organization is well-served by programs such as continuing education, outreach, customized training, and extension services.

Criterion Five: Core Component 5b

The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

It is worth noting that capacity appears in two of the Core Components for this Criterion. Over the last thirty years, many organizations accredited by the Commission have moved their educational offerings off campus into high schools, learning centers, shopping malls, branch campuses, and other locations. In so doing, they have dramatically increased access to higher education. Capacity can be a real challenge to being responsive, no matter how strong the commitment. Some colleges clearly have capacity but have no strong overarching organizational commitment that enables them to make use of it.

An effective college or university is able to define its primary constituencies and communities. For many, geography essentially defines both. For others, both are defined more by shared beliefs. Some more specialized colleges serve both a professional community and a specific business or industry. In an era of intense competition for students and finances, constituencies and communities of service can become extraordinarily fluid. Community colleges, once clear about who their constituents were, now use the Internet to identify constituents in a global rather than local community. Several liberal arts colleges continue to have small residential campuses but have hundreds or thousands of students enrolled in their programs in foreign countries. Regional public universities use technology to expand their constituencies to include many outside the region and the state. The risk of such fluid definitions of constituencies is that none might be served adequately.

A connected organization strives to serve constituencies by creating connections among them as well. Service learning programs, for example, now appear on many campuses. Faculty, students, and external constituencies of the college collaborate in creating activities directly connecting student learning with serving community needs.

Examples of Evidence
As it defines and interprets evidence related to this Core Component, an organization may wish to consider the following Examples of Evidence.

• The organization's structures and processes enable effective connections with its communities.
• The organization's cocurricular activities engage students, staff, administrators, and faculty with external communities.
• The organization's educational programs connect students with external communities.
• The organization's resources—physical, financial, and human—support effective programs of engagement and service.
• Planning processes project ongoing engagement and service.

Criterion Five: Core Component 5c

The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

For the most part, it is the college or university, not the Commission, that determines its constituencies. But organizations of higher learning must accept some constituencies as theirs, and recognize that they have a responsibility
Commission Policy and Good Practices on
Transfer of Credit

TRANSFER OF CREDIT (policy I.C.6)

Each institution determines its own policies and procedures for accepting transfer credits, including credits from accredited and non-accredited institutions, from non-U.S. institutions, and from institutions that grant credit for experiential learning and for adult learner programs. An institution’s periodic review of its transfer policies and procedures should include evaluation of their clarity to those who administer them, to the students who follow them, and to employers and other stakeholders. It should also include the consistency of their interpretation and application throughout the institution, and their responsiveness to new types of learning opportunities outside institutions of higher education.


Good Practice on Transfer

Making Transfer Decisions: Roles and Responsibilities to Assure Quality

Institutions, accreditors and national higher education associations play significant roles and sustain important responsibilities in the transfer process. Each has responsibilities with regard to quality assurance and fairness.

☐ The Role and Responsibilities of Institutions. Colleges and universities are ultimately responsible for decisions about the admission of transfer students and the acceptance or non-acceptance of credits earned elsewhere. Typically, academic faculty and student affairs professionals (working within the framework of faculty rules and standards) determine the transferability of courses and programs. Institutions must balance responsiveness to students’ preferences about transfer with institutional commitment to the value and quality of degrees or other credentials.

☐ The Role and Responsibilities of Accreditors. Institutional (national and regional) accreditors have policies and standards that, in turn, call on institutions and programs to develop and maintain clear transfer policy and practices. Accreditors have expectations, for example, that degree requirements for native students be consistent with those that apply to transfer students. Specialized (programmatic) accreditors often have policies or standards to address transfer, with particular attention to admission practices and assuring equitable treatment for transfer students.

Accreditors are responsible for assuring that institutional transfer practices are consistent with accreditation standards and policies on transfer. They are responsible for maintaining effective communication among accrediting organizations as a means to meet students’ needs in the transfer process while also sustaining quality.

☐ The Role and Responsibilities of National Higher Education Associations. For many years, institutions and accreditors have based their scrutiny of transfer primarily on three criteria contained in the 1978 Joint Statement on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit developed by three national higher education associations. These criteria are:

- the educational quality of the sending institution;
- the comparability of credit to be transferred to the receiving institution; and
- the appropriateness and the applicability of the credit in relation to the programs offered by the receiving institution.

National higher education associations lead the ongoing national conversation about transfer. They work with agencies of the federal government to address transfer issues that reach the level of national public policy, and they provide a national voice for assuring that students are well served by transfer practices that meet students' needs while also sustaining the quality of the system itself.

Criteria for Transfer Decisions

CHEA believes that the three criteria of quality, comparability, and appropriateness and applicability offered in the 1978 Joint Statement remain central to assuring quality in transfer decision-making. The following additional criteria expand this list and are offered to assist institutions, accreditors and higher education associations in future transfer decisions. These criteria are intended to sustain academic quality in an environment of more varied transfer, assure consistency of transfer practice and encourage appropriate accountability about transfer policy and practice.

☐ **Balance in the Use of Accreditation Status in Transfer Decisions.** Institutions and accreditors need to assure that transfer decisions are not made solely on the source of accreditation of a sending program or institution. While acknowledging that accreditation is an important factor, CHEA believes that receiving institutions ought to make clear their institutional reasons for accepting or not accepting credits that students seek to transfer. Students should have reasonable explanations about how work offered for credit is or is not of sufficient quality when compared with the receiving institution and how work is or is not comparable with curricula and standards to meet degree requirements of the receiving institution.

☐ **Consistency.** Institutions and accreditors need to reaffirm that the considerations that inform transfer decisions are applied consistently in the context of changing student attendance patterns (students likely to engage in more transfer) and emerging new providers of higher education (new sources of credit and experience to be evaluated). New providers and new attendance patterns increase the number and type of transfer issues that institutions will address—making consistency even more important in the future.

☐ **Accountability for Effective Public Communication.** Institutions and accreditors need to assure that students and the public are fully and accurately informed about their respective transfer policies and practices. The public has a significant interest in higher education's effective management of transfer, especially in an environment of expanding access and mobility. Public funding is routinely provided to colleges and universities. This funding is accompanied by public expectations that the transfer process is built on a strong commitment to fairness and efficiency.

☐ **Commitment to Address Innovation.** Institutions and accreditors need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to managing transfer when these approaches will benefit students. Distance learning and other applications of technology generate alternative approaches to many functions of colleges and universities. Transfer is inevitable among these.

Finally, CHEA is committed to working with other national higher education associations to convene a group of higher education leaders to address emerging issues for transfer and to develop additional tools and sound practices that can assist institutions as they manage transfer. This national conversation should include attention to how higher education's future will differ from its past and, above all, our responsibilities to students in an increasingly mobile, fast-paced and international environment.

_Approved by CHEA Board of Directors, September 25, 2000._

_Endorsed by the Board of Trustees of The Higher Learning Commission, November 10, 2000._

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_The Higher Learning Commission / NCA_
A Statement to the Community:
Transfer and the Public Interest

This statement, prepared by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation Committee on Transfer and the Public Interest, is addressed to institutions, accreditors and national higher education associations seeking to maintain and enhance conditions of transfer for students.

November 2000
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Council for Higher Education Accreditation
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 510
Washington, DC 20036-1135
tel: (202) 955-6126 • fax: (202) 955-6129
e-mail: chea@chea.org
www.chea.org
A Statement to the Community: 
Transfer and the Public Interest

In December 1998, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) convened a Committee on Transfer and the Public Interest to examine the role of transfer in higher education. This committee attempted to define the responsibilities of national, regional and specialized accreditors as they work with colleges and universities to assure quality in a changing environment for transfer. This statement, the result of the committee’s efforts, is addressed to institutions, accreditors and national higher education associations seeking to maintain and enhance conditions of transfer for students. Transfer issues are not simple, new or easily resolved. This statement seeks to energize the ongoing national conversation about transfer decision-making, setting into motion a more open and accountable transfer process.

“Transfer” as used here refers to the movement of students from one college, university or other education provider to another and to the process by which credits representing educational experiences, courses, degrees or credentials are accepted or not accepted by a receiving institution. The classic form of transfer is vertical transfer, which is to say movement from a two-year college to a four-year college.

Why Examine Transfer at This Time?
Higher education is experiencing a significant change in how students attend college and who provides higher education. Both can have profound effects on students and their opportunities to transfer successfully. The challenge is to make transfer as efficient and effective as possible for those students who have had courses or educational experiences comparable to those offered for credit by the receiving institution. Sound transfer policy and practice, maintaining institutional and accrediting standards, is part of higher education’s commitment to students.

Transfer in higher education is more varied and pervasive now than it used to be. In addition to vertical transfer, students now pursue horizontal transfer as they move from one two-year college to another or from one four-year institution to another. Many students now attend more than one institution at a time, and accordingly face issues not previously seen when they seek to transfer credits. Online courses and courses taken in other countries pose yet another set of issues.

Even more students will seek transfer as “new providers” of higher education (e.g., virtual institutions and corporate providers) and distance learning programs offered by traditional providers increase their enrollments. Accreditors and the colleges will have to find new and better ways to meet the need for transfer services.

Among the key indicators of these changes:

- the majority of 1996 baccalaureate graduates attended at least two colleges and universities;
- many students taking distance learning courses are enrolled in another institution different from the distance learning providers;
- students attending corporate universities and certain unaccredited institutions are seeking to transfer their coursework to accredited institutions;
- increasing numbers of virtual institutions and corporate providers are forming partnerships with traditional providers to offer courses and programs; and
- increasing numbers of students are enrolling in foreign institutions and seeking to transfer credits into American colleges and universities.
Finally, proposals for innovative practices pose new ways to manage credit accumulation and transfer (e.g., third-party verification of transfer credits, electronic storage of and instant access to transfer credits for purposes of review). As these new methods of managing transfer transactions gain prominence, they may well influence how transfer decisions are made.

All of these indicators suggest that higher education is changing in ways that make transfer more important to more students and at the same time more complex.

Making Transfer Decisions: Roles and Responsibilities to Assure Quality

Institutions, accreditors and national higher education associations play significant roles and sustain important responsibilities in the transfer process. Each has responsibilities with regard to quality assurance and fairness.

The Role and Responsibilities of Institutions. Colleges and universities are ultimately responsible for decisions about the admission of transfer students and the acceptance or non-acceptance of credits earned elsewhere. Typically, academic faculty and student affairs professionals (working within the framework of faculty rules and standards) determine the transferability of courses and programs. Institutions must balance responsiveness to students' preferences about transfer with institutional commitment to the value and quality of degrees or other credentials.

The Role and Responsibilities of Accreditors. Institutional (national and regional) accreditors have policies and standards that, in turn, call on institutions and programs to develop and maintain clear transfer policy and practices. Accreditors have expectations, for example, that degree requirements for native students be consistent with those that apply to transfer students. Specialized (programmatic) accreditors often have policies or standards to address transfer, with particular attention to admissions practices and assuring equitable treatment for transfer students.

Accreditors are responsible for assuring that institutional transfer practices are consistent with accreditation standards and policies on transfer. They are responsible for maintaining effective communication among accrediting organizations as a means to meet students' needs in the transfer process while also sustaining quality.

The Role and Responsibilities of National Higher Education Associations. For many years, institutions and accreditors have based their scrutiny of transfer primarily on three criteria contained in the 1978 Joint Statement on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit developed by three national higher education associations. These criteria are:

• the educational quality of the sending institution;
• the comparability of credit to be transferred to the receiving institution; and
• the appropriateness and the applicability of the credit in relation to the programs offered by the receiving institution.

National higher education associations lead the ongoing national conversation about transfer. They work with agencies of the federal government to address transfer issues that reach the level of national public policy and they provide a national voice for assuring that students are well served by transfer practices that meet students' needs while also sustaining the quality of the system itself.
Criteria for Transfer Decisions

CHEA believes that the three criteria of quality, comparability, and appropriateness and applicability offered in the 1978 Joint Statement remain central to assuring quality in transfer decision-making. The following additional criteria expand this list and are offered to assist institutions, accreditors and higher education associations in future transfer decisions. These criteria are intended to sustain academic quality in an environment of more varied transfer, assure consistency of transfer practice and encourage appropriate accountability about transfer policy and practice.

Balance in the Use of Accreditation Status in Transfer Decisions. Institutions and accreditors need to assure that transfer decisions are not made solely on the source of accreditation of a sending program or institution. While acknowledging that accreditation is an important factor, CHEA believes that receiving institutions ought to make clear their institutional reasons for accepting or not accepting credits that students seek to transfer. Students should have reasonable explanations about how work offered for credit is or is not of sufficient quality when compared with the receiving institution and how work is or is not comparable with curricula and standards to meet degree requirements of the receiving institution.

Consistency. Institutions and accreditors need to reaffirm that the considerations that inform transfer decisions are applied consistently in the context of changing student attendance patterns (students likely to engage in more transfer) and emerging new providers of higher education (new sources of credits and experience to be evaluated). New providers and new attendance patterns increase the number and type of transfer issues that institutions will address—making consistency even more important in the future.

Accountability for Effective Public Communication. Institutions and accreditors need to assure that students and the public are fully and accurately informed about their respective transfer policies and practices. The public has a significant interest in higher education's effective management of transfer, especially in an environment of expanding access and mobility. Public funding is routinely provided to colleges and universities. This funding is accompanied by public expectations that the transfer process is built on a strong commitment to fairness and efficiency.

Commitment to Address Innovation. Institutions and accreditors need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to managing transfer when these approaches will benefit students. Distance learning and other applications of technology generate alternative approaches to many functions of colleges and universities. Transfer is inevitably among these.

Finally, CHEA is committed to working with other national higher education associations to convene a group of higher education leaders to address emerging issues for transfer and to develop additional tools and sound practices that can assist institutions as they manage transfer. This national conversation should include attention to how higher education's future will differ from its past and, above all, our responsibilities to students in an increasingly mobile, fast-paced and international environment.

Approved by CHEA Board of Directors, September 25, 2000
Appendix

This appendix contains brief descriptions of methods of managing transfer available in addition to institutional transfer decision-making. It includes a description of transfer and credit equivalency as determined by the American Council on Education's (ACE's) Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials, the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges' (SOC) approach to transfer oversight, and a profile of statewide articulation policies. It also includes a description of the most common method of determining levels of transfer activity or "transfer rates" as developed by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges.

Transfer and Credit Equivalency (American Council on Education)

Colleges and universities are not the sole providers of teaching and learning in higher education. Students can and do receive education and training from a variety of sources including the military, the workplace, apprenticeship and training programs and indigenous high school advanced placement programs. To help institutions reach judgments about how to treat such education for transfer purposes, ACE's Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials operates programs to determine credit equivalencies for various modes of extra-institutional learning. Virtually every higher education admissions office has the following two references, both of which are published by ACE:

• The National Guide to Educational Credit for Training Programs
  This guide evaluates formal educational programs and courses offered by organizations for their employees, members, or customers and makes college credit recommendations accordingly. These organizations include business and industry, labor unions, professional and voluntary associations, schools, institutes, and government agencies. In addition, the guide contains credit recommendations for courses offered by home-study schools that are accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council.

• The Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services
  This guide evaluates and makes credit recommendations for formal educational programs and courses offered by the United States armed services. The guide also makes credit recommendations for Military Occupational Specialties (MOS). In addition, this guide is available in an online searchable format.

Credit by Examination

ACE evaluates examinations published by a variety of organizations and has recommended college credit for students who are successful in passing them. The more prominent examinations include: the ACT Proficiency Examination Program (PEP); Regents' College Examinations; the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Program; the College Board's College-Level Examination Program (CLEP); and the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) Subject Standardized Testing (DSST) Program. The examinations cover a wide spectrum of the subject matter taught in higher education.

In practice, the majority of higher education institutions accept the examinations for credit in one form or another. Institutions may have varying standards for acceptance and applicability toward the student's academic program. However, the examinations have been an integral and accepted component of the transfer process for many years. To assist the colleges and universities in making credit decisions, ACE publishes the Guide to Educational Credit by Examination that reviews the content and psychometric properties of these
tests and industry certification examinations. Specific credit recommendations are included based on student scoring levels and overall performance.

**Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC)**

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) is a consortium of about 1,400 institutions dedicated to helping servicemembers and their families get college degrees. SOC is committed to ensuring that students who are in the military do not have to repeat classes unnecessarily and can achieve their degree goals, rather than just accumulate course credit as they move from place to place. To be a member of SOC, institutions must agree to:

a) design transfer practices that minimize loss of credit and avoid duplication of coursework;
b) limit the amount of coursework that students must take at a single college to no more than 25 percent of degree requirements;
c) award credit recommended by the American Council on Education’s (ACE) *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services* for military training and experience when applicable to servicemembers’ degree programs; and
d) award credit for at least one of the nationally recognized testing programs, such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), the DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), or the Regents College Examinations (RCE).

SOC also maintains "degree networks" of approximately 130 institutions that agree to a guaranteed transfer system among network members. SOC publishes transferability tables containing those courses that have been identified by degree network institutions as guaranteed to be accepted for transfer. SOC publishes *Credit Education Supplements* that match ACE-recommended credit for military service school courses and occupations with course requirements within the network degree systems. Credit-matching information for national test programs is also provided.
Statewide Articulation Policy

Ignash and Townsend surveyed the fifty states in Spring 1998 to determine which had a statewide articulation agreement, when the agreement was developed, what the agreement included, what sort of communication methods were used to provide information to students and how the agreement was evaluated for effectiveness. Forty-three states responded with usable results. The following table describes types of transfer covered by state policy and the percentage of undergraduates covered by the statewide agreements in the thirty-four states.

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<th>2- to 4-year</th>
<th>2 to 2</th>
<th>4 to 4</th>
<th>4 to 2 (reverse transfers)</th>
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<th>Publics and private non-profit</th>
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*Percentage includes regionally accredited private institutions only.

**Some voluntary compliance among the major, for-profit, private institutions.

Transfer Rate
(Two-Year to Four-Year Institutions)

Since 1989, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges has been collecting data on transfer using the definition, "All students entering the two-year college in a given year who have no prior college experience and who complete at least 12 college credit units within four years of entry, divided into the number of that group who take one or more classes at an in-state, public university within four-years." The data show that approximately 22 percent of the entrants who receive 12 credits matriculate at a university. This is assuredly an undercount because the definition omits those who take longer than four years to transfer, who transfer to an independent university, or who transfer out of state. The data regarding numbers of students transferring are remarkably consistent when aggregated nationwide over time. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Graduating Class of 1972, for example, Adelman reported that "1 out of 5 individuals who attend two-year colleges eventually attends a four-year college."

Another way of looking at the community college contribution to students attaining the baccalaureate is by conducting retrospective studies, examining the transcripts of baccalaureate recipients to see how many transferred credits from community colleges. Here the figures usually show that between 30 and 60 percent of the people obtaining degrees from public universities have some community college courses on their record.

The national averages mask the wide variation in transfer rates among states and among colleges in the same state. The range between states is from 11 to 40%, but the range within the state may be from 4 percent to more than 50 percent. Some of the reasons for the wide interstate disparity are related to the history and structure of higher education within a state. Where the two-year colleges were organized as branch campuses of the state university, the transfer rates are high; where they began as technical institutes emphasizing trade and industry programs, the transfer rates are low. Deviations from the norm appear also in states where transfer to independent universities is a prominent feature of the higher education system. Transfer rates among colleges in the same state show wide variation because of local conditions, including community demographics and college proximity to a university campus. However, one conclusion seems clear: transfer rates within a college, college system, or state change little from year to year. They are embedded in institutional histories and circumstances. Most colleges draw the same types of students from the same secondary schools year after year. And they send the same proportion of them on to the same universities. The only trends affecting that situation are massive shifts in community demographics (rare phenomena) or long-term, well-funded occupational programs designed for specific local industries, again, rare phenomena.
Committee on Transfer and the Public Interest

Clifford Adelman
Senior Research Analyst
U.S. Department of Education

Hans Brisch
Chancellor
Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

Constance Carroll
President
San Diego Mesa College

John T. Casteen, III, Chair
President
University of Virginia

Arthur Cohen
Professor
University of California–Los Angeles

Ron Cowell
President
The Education Policy and Leadership Center

Steven D. Crow
Executive Director
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

William DeLauder
President
Delaware State University

Sandra Elman
Executive Director
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
Commission on Colleges

Steve F. Kime
Director
Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities

Michael Lambert
Executive Secretary
Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council

Donald N. Langenberg
Chancellor
University System of Maryland

Ira Lechner
Board of Directors
Council for Higher Education Accreditation

Richard E. Mandeville
Director
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
Commission on Technical and Career Institutions

Stephen D. Parker
Executive Director
Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools

Shirley Peterson
President, Hood College

James T. Rogers
Executive Director
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges

Kala Stroup
Commissioner
State of Missouri Coordination Board for Higher Education

Jerry Sullivan
Executive Director
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

Richard Traina
President, Clark University

David B. Wolf
Executive Director
Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Transfer of credit between institutions has been a difficult matter for American higher education to manage. The confounding issues have been several. Among them are the perception of institutional prestige, the obligation that an institution has to the integrity of its certificates, diplomas and degrees, and the institution's source of accreditation (a matter of particular difficulty when both nationally and regionally accredited institutions are involved). Stripped to its essence, however, the transfer of credit matter is about fairness to students and how to achieve it.

While attempts to address these matters have been underway for many decades, they took on a new order when CHEA began the conversations that resulted in the publication of "A Statement to the Community: Transfer and the Public Interest" in September, 2000. Soon thereafter "A Framework for Meeting Transfer of Credit Responsibilities" was released in May, 2002. This latter publication contained what has become known at the "CHEA Principles:"

- *Accredited* status of an institution is an important, but not the sole, factor to consider in transfer of credit decisions.
- *Considering* transfer requests serves students and the public. The public interest and students are best served when institutions commit to at least consideration of transfer requests, not rejecting such requests out of hand.
- *Accepting* transfer credits is the responsibility and prerogative of institutions.

While every regional and national accreditor has endorsed these principles in one manner or another, their impact on schools, colleges and universities has only been very limited.

As a result there is much that needs to be done, and in the view of many--including all of the members of this panel--there is much that can be done. The purpose, then, of this afternoon's session is to continue the discussion with the intention of promoting action that will further the appropriate transfer of credit. We welcome you to join us.

January 29, 2008
Transfer of Credit: Taking a Fresh Look or Continuing the Controversy?

The transfer of credit issue is being played out in the federal arena, caught up in the current reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Each of the reauthorization bills under consideration in the House and Senate takes steps to assert a greater federal interest in successful transfer – an unusual if not unprecedented move in the history of this legislation. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has just released a report (http://www.gao.gov/htext/d0622.html) that captures this issue, particularly as it relates to the role of accreditation in encouraging or inhibiting successful transfer.

Transfer has been an integral and useful part of the higher education landscape for many years. It is not unusual for students to move from one college or university to another in the course of pursuing an academic program. When this happens, students seek to have the academic credits they have earned at one institution accepted by their new college or university. Receiving institutions evaluate the courses or programs completed by these students and make judgments about how many credits to accept.

Although transfer is not unusual, it is, at present, a controversial and highly charged issue, at least in Washington DC. There is conflict between those who view transfer as effective and those who believe that we have a major problem with transfer. There is conflict between those who view transfer as an instance of academic decision making and those who view transfer as a tool to enhance access and equity for students. The transfer controversy also has something of an unfortunate have/have-not element to it. The “haves” are usually portrayed as four-year institutions that are regionally accredited; “have-nots” are usually portrayed as either two-year regionally accredited institutions or two- and four-year nationally accredited institutions that have students seeking to enter the four-year institutions.

Effective or Ineffective?
Those who see transfer as effective point out that transfer of credit has been a notable enabler of student mobility. Estimates vary, but between 40 percent and 65 percent of students who are obtaining the baccalaureate are attending at least two higher education institutions. This extensive student mobility is clear evidence that transfer of credit has been “working” for some time.

Those who believe that there is a transfer problem point to instances where student mobility is constricted – credits do not transfer. They question whether the refusal to accept credit is based on legitimate considerations. And they query whether there is an element of unfairness for some students seeking to move from one
institution to another and failing to receive credit for prior work.

An Academic or Access Issue?
Those who view transfer primarily as an academic issue have confidence in the current practice where faculty in receiving institutions review the curricula and standards of courses or programs intended for transfer and indicate to students whether these offerings are acceptable. Faculty transfer decisions are judgments about the quality and content of an academic experience in sending institutions. When an institution accepts transfer credits, it is making a statement that it will stand behind the quality of the offerings of another institution.

In this academic context, accreditation is viewed as assisting transfer when it signals to a receiving institution that a sending institution has met at least threshold standards of quality. Indeed, historically, easing transfer has often been viewed as a major justification for maintaining a robust accreditation system.

Those who view transfer as primarily an access and equity issue point out that we live in a highly competitive society where higher education is more and more of a vital asset. There is enormous pressure on students to enter higher education, earn a credential and continue their education as a means of advancing their careers. At the same time that the need for higher education continues to intensify, the price of higher education continues to rise. Transfer has emerged as an essential tool for student mobility in this high-demand/high-price environment. Success with regard to transfer means additional educational opportunities, options and flexibility for students.

In an access and equity context, accreditation tends to be viewed less as making transfer work and more as a challenge and potentially a barrier to transfer. This is the case especially when the type of accreditation (e.g., national or regional) held by an institution can result in the denial even to consider transfer requests.

Is Anybody “Right”? What to Do About Transfer
Everybody is right about transfer. Transfer is effective – witness the extent of student mobility. There are transfer problems – witness that some students are unable to move from two-year to four-year institutions or from nationally accredited to regionally accredited institutions, experiencing outright denial of consideration of transfer requests or loss of credits. Yes, transfer is an academic issue involving decisions about curriculum and standards, but, yes, transfer is also an access and equity issue and an increasingly important tool to students to successfully navigate the current higher education environment.

We need to do more than be right. It is not enough to say that transfer is an academic issue and ignore access and equity concerns. It is not enough to focus only on the access and equity issues and ignore academic concerns. It is irresponsible to say that transfer is effective and ignore pockets of transfer ineffectiveness. It is unreasonable to focus only on the problem areas of transfer and deny its effectiveness. It is time we put an end to the unfortunate have/have-not element in our midst. As with so many things, we know what is needed to make transfer work – we just need to do it.

Presidents, provosts, deans and admissions officers at receiving institutions can take a fresh look at institutional transfer policy and practice. Yes, these are academic decisions, but has the transfer population increased or diversified over the years? If you are in a nonprofit, site-based institution, are you receiving more and more transfer requests from, e.g., students in for-profit schools or in distance learning schools? Is your transfer policy adequate to address the stop-in/stop-out student? When was the last time that your institution’s catalog was reviewed, and what does it say about transfer? Given the continuing diversification and
complexity of higher education, is it time for a transfer policy overhaul?

Similarly, are officials at sending institutions taking a fresh look at their transfer practices? Have curricula been reviewed to minimize the likelihood that transfer requests will be refused by a receiving institution? Do you have a small group of primary receiving institutions with which you are in regular contact? Do students receive adequate assistance when making transfer decisions, such as information about transfer options and designing a program to minimize if not eliminate any loss of transfer credits?

Accreditors can take a fresh look at their policies and standards as they relate to transfer. Are these appropriate for the current diverse and complex higher education environment? The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has long held a position that accredited status should not be the sole reason for refusal at least to consider transfer requests. A number of institutional accreditors and higher education associations have endorsed this position. Are institutions responsive to accreditors’ expectations of transfer practice consistent with this policy? What more can accreditors do to aid student transfer?

Most of all, we need to address the have/have-not mentality, going beyond notions such as “all nonprofit higher education is good” and “all for-profit higher education is suspect.” Or the notion that two-year education is consistently inferior to four-year education. Or the idea that distance learning invariably has less academic value than site-based learning. All of these notions require re-examination.

Transfer is valuable, perhaps essential, to higher education. We can get more from taking a fresh look at transfer than from continuing the current controversy.