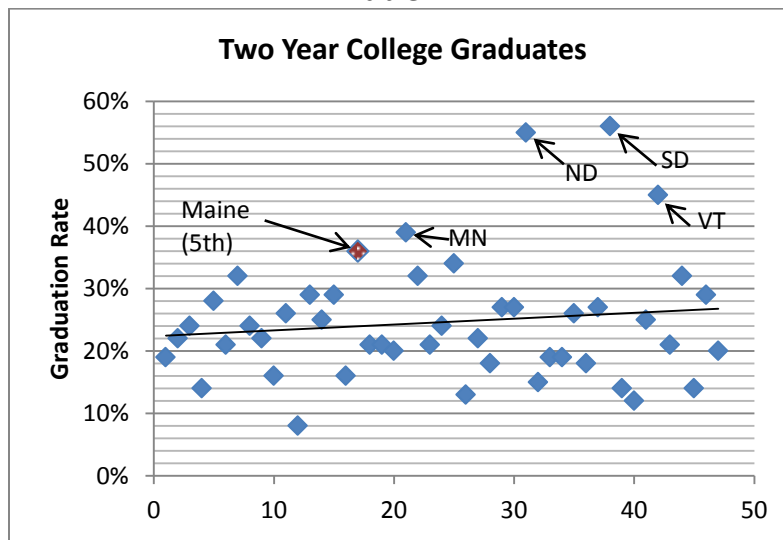


Briefing to the Credit Transfer Project Steering Committee

Today more than ever, publically funded institutions of higher education find themselves in forefront of addressing the challenges of college affordability, access, and completion. Our most underserved populations are among the least able to afford the continuous escalation of tuition, the least likely to enroll in college, and the least likely to complete degree and certificate programs if they do enroll. The students from these groups who do enroll often choose the most affordable postsecondary education option—community colleges. Once enrolled, the strategies many of these students use to pay for college often significantly reduce their likelihood of completing any college program. Thus, it is common to find that students in community colleges typically graduate at a rate about half that of students enrolled in publically funded universities. Completion rates in Maine’s community college system are among the top five in the nation according to a study funded jointly by the Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.¹

Table 1²



Equally important, in many states the effectiveness of the transfer path from community colleges to four-year baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities is particularly critical to improving college completion rates and raising the proportion of residents who earn baccalaureate degrees. One would expect the high ranking of Maine’s two-year college

¹ NationalCenter for Public Policy and Higher Education, “Affordability and Transfer: Critical to Increasing Baccalaureate Degree Completion,” *Policy Alert* (June, 2011)

² NCPPE, “Affordability and Transfer,” (June, 2011).

graduation rates to be reflected in subsequent enrollments in baccalaureate programs. Surprisingly this is not true. Maine is near the bottom of national rankings of two-year graduates moving on to bachelor's programs.

Table 2³

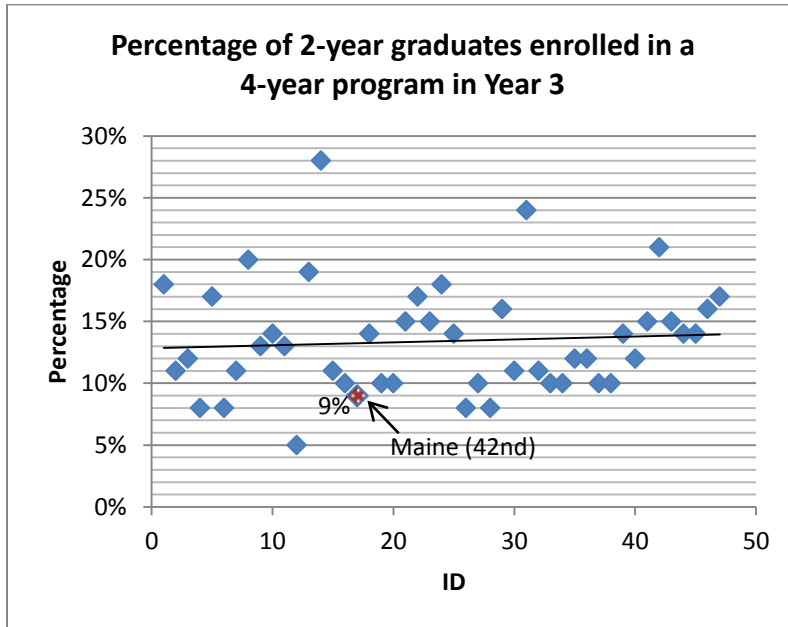
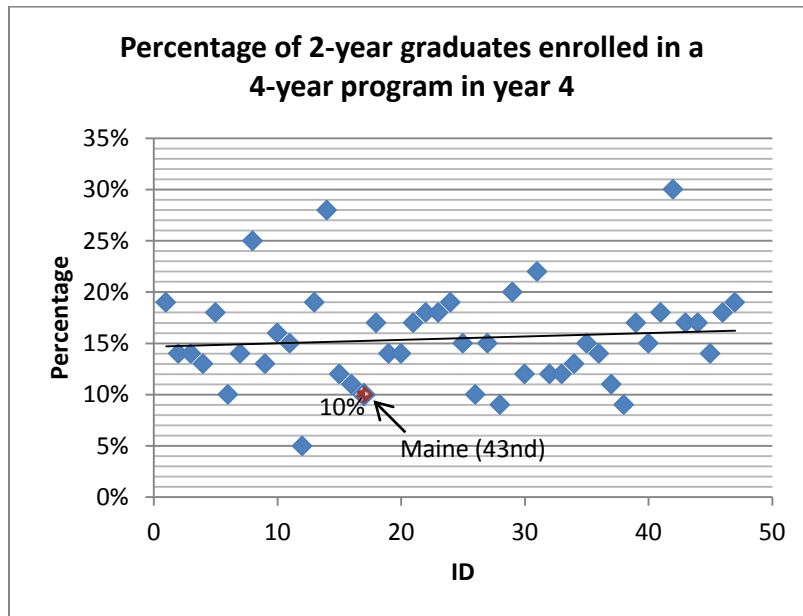


Table 3⁴



³ NCPPE, "Affordability and Transfer," (June, 2011).

⁴ NCPPE, "Affordability and Transfer," (June, 2011).

Because so many students who express interest in pursuing a bachelor’s degree often begin at community colleges, Maine’s initiatives to improve baccalaureate completion should incorporate policies and practices that explicitly address college transfer for community college students as well as public university students. “In the absence of comprehensive, integrated statewide transfer policies, many students will find that credits they have accumulated at a community college will not count toward their bachelor’s degree at a four-year institution.”⁵ A fundamental best practice principle from the Steering Committee’s charge is illustrated here: Maine needs a reliable, robust college transfer system which includes both a clear and efficient route for students from the community colleges to the bachelor’s degree as well as for students navigating through the baccalaureate offerings of the public university system.

Best Practices

Examples of good practices are found at every one of Maine’s public universities. The bad news is that most of them operate in isolation, they have not been implemented “to scale,” or they are not embedded within a policy structure suited for statewide implementation. In a recent study the Education Commission of the States concluded that states can improve transfer rates by creating state-wide and system-wide articulation policies and agreements. Articulation programs, whether codified in legislation or negotiated through cooperative agreements among higher education systems, offer a model pathway toward bachelor’s degree completion.⁶

Table 4

COMMON ARTICULATION ELEMENTS⁷

Statewide Policy: Legislatures and higher education systems adopt articulation policies at the state level.

Cooperative Agreements: Cooperative agreements between postsecondary institutions allow articulation in situations where no state or system policy exists.

Transfer Data Reporting: States that collect data on transfer and student persistence currently have or are developing the capacity to monitor the success of articulation programs.

Incentives and Rewards: In an effort to encourage transfer between two- and four-year colleges, some states provide extra incentive by offering financial aid, guaranteed transfer, or priority admission.

Statewide Articulation Guide: Statewide articulation guides provide concrete descriptions of major requirements and attempt to answer questions students may have regarding the transfer process.

Common Core: A common core streamlines the articulation process by eliminating the confusion that can arise when separate institutions require different core courses to fulfill graduation requirements.

Common Course Numbering: If course numbers at community colleges and four-year universities are identical, the possibility of a student taking non-transferable credits is greatly reduced.

---Education Commission of the States

⁵ NCPPE, “Affordability and Transfer,” (June, 2011).

⁶ Matthew Smith, *StateNotes*, “Transfer and Articulation Policies” (Denver: Education Commission of the States, December, 2010).

⁷ Smith “Transfer and Articulation Policies” (Dec., 2010).

At least two-thirds of the states have one or more of these “Common Articulation Elements” identified by the Education Commission of the States report. Thirty-six states have four or more elements, which reinforce one another to make transfer smoother for students.⁸ Maine is the *only* state which listed as “No” to all six Common Articulation Elements.

In a 2010 national study the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, also offered six (6) “Common Aspects of Articulation and Transfer Practice” (Table 5).

Table 5

COMMON ASPECTS OF ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER PRACTICE⁹
<p>General Education Common Core: Broadly speaking, practices of this nature attempt to assure that the general education portion of a degree – as opposed to specific major requirements – are easily transferrable from one institution to another.</p>
<p>Common Course Numbering: In its purest form, this practice would result in course numbers being identical within a state, irrespective of the institution or level. States may find it easier to apply a common course number to “common courses” – those for which content is general and well-established – than for those that are more specialized.</p>
<p>Statewide Major Articulation: This aspect of policy is more accurately described as “program-major-to program-major” articulation. This provision in its pure form allows students to change institutions seamlessly if they maintain their major area of study. As implemented, however, this practice may or may not ensure transferability of lower-division major prerequisites, for example.</p>
<p>Block Transfer Credit: Practices that allow credits earned to transfer en masse. Block credit transfer is typically applicable to general education or prerequisite courses. This practice intends to avoid course-by-course evaluation of transferability.</p>
<p>Transfer Associate’s Degree: The most popular of the common articulation and transfer practices, it eliminates the need for course-by-course examinations of credit transfer. Most typically applied to associate of arts or science degrees, assuring acceptance to an institution as a junior, while not guaranteeing admission to a major program.</p>
<p>---Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education</p>

Maine had none of these practices in place either state- or system-wide at the time of the survey (see Appendix A).

In summary, this brief review of national state- and system-wide surveys has identified nine (9) widely used best practices – three (3) of which (general education core, common course numbering, and major-to-major articulation) are common to both studies. Only one of these practices currently are in use in Maine.

⁸ Matthew Smith, *StateNotes*, “Transfer and Articulation Policies” (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 2010).

⁹ Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Promising Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems* (June 2010).

Other Best Practice Considerations

The steering Committee's of best practices should also include a consideration of other transfer best practices, even though they did not appear in the two national surveys nor be in common statewide use elsewhere. It is through the adaptation of such forward-looking best practices to our circumstances that Maine's public universities can transform from a trailer to a leader in statewide transfer practice and student success.

PROMISING PRACTICES¹⁰

Statewide Committees: Develop a statewide, standing committee to focus on multi-institution transfer and articulation.

Faculty Involvement: Involve faculty in policy development and implementation.

State-level Transfer Office/Official: Designate campus or state-level personnel as contact persons for transfer and articulation

Professional Transfer Associations/Personnel: Designate campus or state-level personnel as contact persons for transfer and articulation

Transfer Fairs/Summits/Conferences/Meetings: Convene or establish a presence at fairs, summits, conferences, and meetings to communicate with students and their families about transfer and articulation.

Electronic Communication Tools: Build a strong presence for articulation and transfer on the Web.

Statewide Articulation Agreements Between Program Majors: Provide clear transfer pathways for community college students who have selected a program major.

General Education Core Requirements: Develop a clear pathway for community college students to meet common general education requirements.

Guaranteed Admissions Policies: Implement guaranteed admission policies for community college students who have met all transfer-related benchmarks.

Transfer Student Bill of Rights: Publish a transfer student bill of rights to specify the treatment transfer students can expect during their transition.

Statewide Principles for Transfer: Develop and disseminate statewide principles related to transfer and articulation.

Funding for Transfer-Related Performance: Provide funding incentives to institutions that perform well in terms of student transfers.

Retroactive [Reverse] Degree Completion Initiatives: Provide alternate pathways to degree completion.

---Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

¹⁰ Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Promising Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems* (June 2010).

Policy Considerations

America's state higher education policy infrastructure, while not perfect, served the country well until the 1990s. Now, in the era popularized by Ellen Chaffee and Jane Wellman as the "New Normal," however, we are devoid of a template which is sufficient to solve many of higher education's new problems.¹¹ It is imperative that public higher education systems take primary responsibility for redesigning public policy for higher education. Even the most enlightened solitary institutional decisions rarely add up on a scale that really matters at the level statewide policy and goals. It falls to collectively organized systems of public institutions to make changes in their academic and administrative operations if we are to successfully respond to the challenges implicit in the New Normal.¹²

In a 2010 study Peter Ewell and others¹³ concluded that, "transfer policies are critically important for states to focus on as a way to increase the educational attainment of their populations. Unless transfer becomes a seamless process for students and does not require students to take excessive credits to earn a bachelor's degree, it is unlikely that these states will make dramatic improvements in bachelor's degree attainment."¹⁴ In this *Good Policy, Good Practice* study the following lessons were cited:¹⁵

- States seeking statewide reform in this arena must have an entity capable of leading the development and implementation of any transfer reform initiative.
- The more standardized the general education curriculum, the smoother the transfer path.
- It is important to go beyond the general education curriculum and integrate standardized lower division curricula that prepare students for upper division work in specific (most popular) majors.
- Simplifying and standardizing the transfer processes is more effective than developing communication tools that help students navigate a complex process.

Next Steps

Another strategy within the change process is the "policy audit." An audit of existing higher education policies can be used as a tool to highlight the disconnect between current policies and the state's goals for higher education. It can also shed light on the policy areas in need of most attention and reform.¹⁶

¹¹ Ellen Chaffee and Jane Wellman, "Improving Cost-Effectiveness: Leadership Challenges for Public Higher Education" AGB National Conference on Trusteeship (Los Angeles, April 2011)
<http://agb.org/sites/agb.org/files/u3/ImprovingCostEffectiveness.pdf>

¹² Brenneman, Callan, Ewell, et al., "Good Policy, Good Practice" (Nov., 2010).

¹³ Meghan Wilson Brenneman, Patrick M. Callan, Peter T. Ewell, Joni E. Finney, Dennis P. Jones, and Stacey Zis, *Joint Report from The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems*, "Good Policy, Good Practice II -- Improving Outcomes and Productivity in Higher Education: A Guide for Policymakers" (National Center Report #10-01, Nov., 2010).

¹⁴ Brenneman, Callan, Ewell, et al., "Good Policy, Good Practice" (Nov., 2010).

¹⁵ Moore, C., Shulock, N. & Jensen, C. (2009). *Crafting a Student-Centered Transfer Process in California: Lesson from Other States*. Institute for Leadership and Higher Education Policy: Sacramento, CA.
http://www.csus.edu/ihelp/PDFs/R_Transfer_Report_08-09.pdf. quoted in Brenneman, Callan, Ewell, et al., "Good Policy, Good Practice" (Nov., 2010).

¹⁶ Meghan Wilson Brenneman, Patrick M. Callan, Peter T. Ewell, Joni E. Finney, Dennis P. Jones, and Stacey Zis, *Joint Report from The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education*

Under separate cover Rosa Redonnett has provided a compendium of documents that comprise a basis for review of the current status of transfer articulation policies and practices within the University of Maine System.

Both the best practices review and the policy audit will need to be completed before the end of June in order to be forwarded to the Board of Trustees through its Academic Affairs Committee for the July 9th meeting. In addition, the Steering Committee will need to develop conceptual models for both intra-system and inter-system transfer articulation policies for the July 9th meeting.

Concluding Thoughts

This briefing paper has provided a broad overview of transfer best practices. Its purpose is to serve as a timely base to further our discussion and investigation into select best practices which will form the foundation of the Steering Committee's Change Analysis.

This quick review reinforces basic principles previously set before the Steering Committee:

- That the changing nature of public higher education has outstripped the viability of Maine's existing models for awarding transfer credits are at best antiquated;
- That best practice solutions exist which can be implemented to create a comparative advantage for Maine's public universities – at least in the New England region;
- That the design phase of this project is time critical.

So, in the words of Ellen Chaffee, "The next big thing . . . is **to lead change** (original emphasis). We cannot turn back the clock, and hope is not a strategy. What we can do is reaffirm our values, face the challenges, and apply our formidable talents and loyalties."¹⁷

Thanks for lending your formidable talents and loyalties to this next big thing!



Wilson G. Hess
Chair

May 29, 2012

And The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, "Good Policy, Good Practice II -- Improving Outcomes and Productivity in Higher Education: A Guide for Policymakers" (National Center Report #10-01, Nov., 2010)

¹⁷ Chaffee, "What's the Next Big Thing for Boards?" *Trusteeship* (Nov. 2011)

Appendix A¹⁸

Transfer & Completion Rates at Two-Year Colleges for Students Starting at Two-Year Colleges

State	Graduated from a 2-year institution	Enrolled in a 4-year institution in year 3	Enrolled in a 4-year institution in year 4	Graduated from a 4-year institution
Alabama	19%	18%	19%	14%
Arizona	22%	11%	14%	11%
Arkansas	24%	12%	14%	10%
California	14%	8%	13%	11%
Colorado	28%	17%	18%	10%
Connecticut	21%	8%	10%	7%
Florida	32%	11%	14%	13%
Georgia	24%	20%	25%	22%
Hawaii	22%	13%	13%	11%
Idaho	16%	14%	16%	15%
Illinois	26%	13%	15%	15%
Indiana	8%	5%	5%	5%
Iowa	29%	19%	19%	17%
Kansas	25%	28%	28%	21%
Kentucky	29%	11%	12%	9%
Louisiana	16%	10%	11%	7%
Maine	36%	9%	10%	5%
Maryland	21%	14%	17%	15%
Massachusetts	21%	10%	14%	8%
Michigan	20%	10%	14%	12%
Minnesota	39%	15%	17%	12%
Mississippi	32%	17%	18%	15%
Missouri	21%	15%	18%	15%
Montana	24%	18%	19%	12%
Nebraska	34%	14%	15%	12%
Nevada	13%	8%	10%	7%
New Jersey	22%	10%	15%	13%
New Mexico	18%	8%	9%	5%
New York	27%	16%	20%	16%
North Carolina	27%	11%	12%	9%
North Dakota	55%	24%	22%	19%
Ohio	15%	11%	12%	9%
Oklahoma	19%	10%	12%	9%
Oregon	19%	10%	13%	10%
Pennsylvania	26%	12%	15%	13%
Rhode Islands	18%	12%	14%	8%
South Carolina	27%	10%	11%	9%
South Dakota	56%	10%	9%	3%
Tennessee	14%	14%	17%	14%
Texas	12%	12%	15%	12%
Utah	25%	15%	18%	13%
Vermont	45%	21%	30%	20%
Virginia	21%	15%	17%	15%
Washington	32%	14%	17%	15%
West Virginia	14%	14%	14%	9%
Wisconsin	29%	16%	18%	12%
Wyoming	20%	17%	19%	15%
Maine's Rank	5th	42nd	43rd	45th

Note: Data unavailable for Alaska, Delaware, and New Hampshire
Source: NCHEMS analysis of National Student Clearinghouse data (Sept. 2009)

¹⁸ National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, "Affordability and Transfer: Critical to Increasing Baccalaureate Degree Completion" *Policy Alert* (June, 2011).

Appendix B ¹⁹



Table 1. Common Aspects of Articulation and Transfer Practice

State	General Education Common Core	Common Course Numbering	Statewide Major Articulation	Block Credit Transfer	Transfer Associate's Degree
Alabama			X		
Alaska*				X	
Arizona	X		X		X
Arkansas	X		X		X
California*					
Colorado			X		
Connecticut*					
Delaware*					
Florida		X	X	X	X
Georgia				X	X
Hawaii			X	X	X
Idaho	X				X
Illinois*	X		X	X	X
Indiana			X		X
Iowa*			X		X
Kansas*					
Kentucky	X		X	X	X
Louisiana*					
Maine					
Maryland			X	X	X
Massachusetts				X	X
Michigan*					
Minnesota	X		X	X	X
Mississippi					X
Missouri*	X		X	X	X
Montana	X	X		X	
Nebraska*					
Nevada*	X	X	X		X
New Hampshire					
New Jersey				X	X
New Mexico	X		X	X	X
New York*					X
North Carolina				X	X
North Dakota	X	X	X	X	
Ohio			X		X
Oklahoma			X		
Oregon	X	X		X	X
Pennsylvania					
Rhode Island*					
South Carolina					X
South Dakota*					X
Tennessee*					X
Texas	X	X	X	X	X
Utah*	X	X	X	X	X
Vermont*					
Virginia					X
Washington	X		X	X	X
West Virginia					X
Wisconsin			X	X	X
Wyoming*					
Total	15	7	22	20	31

* Denotes a state that did not return the administration survey or did not provide a statewide contact for this survey.

¹⁹ NationalCenter for Public Policy and Higher Education, “Affordability and Transfer: Critical to Increasing Baccalaureate Degree Completion” Policy Alert (June, 2011).