



## MassTransfer Pathways Fall 2017 Conference Notes

October 27, 2017

Royal Plaza Hotel and Trade Center

181 Boston Post Road West | Marlborough, MA 01752

- I. **Welcome:** Elena Quiroz-Livanis, Chief of Staff and Director of Academic Policy and Student Success, called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. and introduced Dr. Carlos E. Santiago, Commissioner of Higher Education for Massachusetts.
- II. **Introduction to MassTransfer:** Commissioner Santiago recounted briefly the recent history of the evolution of the MassTransfer programs and emphasized their importance in developing a unified system of transfer for students attending Massachusetts public higher education institutions.
  - A. The development of the MassTransfer A2B (associate to bachelor) pathways began in 2014 with six major programs of study: Biology, Chemistry, Economics, History, Political Science and Psychology. Faculty from all three segments of Massachusetts public higher education—community colleges, state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses—came together to create these pathways. From the start, the focus has been on the process. We didn't know what the outcome would be. We recognized the threat that the outcome could be mandated. Instead, though, we have demonstrated that a mandate is not necessary and that the best outcome will emerge from the work of faculty in their fields of study. Today we embark on our fourth cycle of pathways with Nursing and Social Work.
  - B. Commissioner Santiago thanked all of those who have participated in the continual process of examination and re-examination of how the Commonwealth can better serve its transfer students. He noted especially faculty, transfer professionals, Elena and her staff at the Department of Higher Education (DHE) and Paul Raverta and his staff of retirees working on the project.
  - C. The A2B pathways have served as a foundation for other work, such as the Commonwealth Commitment program, the mathematics pathways, the examination of developmental studies and dual enrollment opportunities. The collaborative approach has created a sense of "system-ness," despite the importance of local control and autonomy treasured by Massachusetts public higher education.
  - D. Higher education is at a national crossroads and faces many challenges. Increasingly critics question the value of a bachelor's degree. An October 26th Boston Globe article by Deirdre Fernandez, "Harvard's surplus may be 'high water mark'," highlights some of those challenges, including a declining college-bound population, the cost of higher education growing increasingly unaffordable for many families and the expectation that endowments will decrease. While some planners forecast that the traditional college-aged population would begin to rebound by 2025, it now seems more likely that the rebound won't occur until 2035. During this period

demographic changes will lead to half of the student body being non-white and achievement gaps among demographic groups will continue to widen.

- E. In New England, competition for the declining pool of college-bound students has intensified. Maine, Connecticut and New York have initiated programs that are drawing students away from Massachusetts. Meanwhile, funding for public higher education is not likely to increase significantly, especially given the aging of the general population and its growing health care needs.
- F. Commissioner Santiago envisions a higher education model that begins at the elementary school level. After all, it is higher education that trains those teachers. We will need to bring first-generation students into our higher education system at higher rates than previously achieved. We need to change the perspective of first-generation students, while recognizing that they face real-life issues such as homelessness, hunger, transportation and day care for their children. The current and future higher education environment is much different from the one our veteran educators encountered as they began their careers, when institutions could operate as gate-keepers and there seemed to be no shortage of students.
- G. We work in a fundamentally transformational time in higher education. Our ability to work together will be a crucial element in our future success. MassTransfer has demonstrated that by working collaboratively we can substantially improve the transfer experience of our students.
- H. Commissioner Santiago invited Senior Advisor Paul Raverta, retired president of Berkshire Community College, to talk with the group about what's new in MassTransfer and the goals for the day.

III. **What's New in MassTransfer and Goals for the Day:** Paul picked up on the Commissioner's use of the term "transformational" and led the group through a presentation describing the transformation of MassTransfer in recent years.

- A. Paul called the group's attention to the first slide of the presentation that invited the group to join the conversation on Twitter (Follow at MassDHE; use #MassTransfer).
- B. MassTransfer now consists of six components: the course equivalency database (MAST), the General Education Foundation, A2B pathways, the Commonwealth Commitment, Reverse Transfer and Transfer Principles.
- C. The course equivalency database (MAST) now contains more than 11,000 courses and an annual update process is in place to maintain the currency and accuracy of the database.
- D. The 34-credit traditional General Education Foundation now has a 28-credit variant for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs.
- E. Today we begin Cycle IV of the MassTransfer A2B pathways with Nursing and Social Work/Human Services. The process to develop the pathways takes two years, which means that these pathways will not be available until fall 2019. With this fourth cycle, the A2B pathways cover approximately 80 percent of all transfer students within the Massachusetts public higher education system.

- F. The Commonwealth Commitment, initiated with the 2016-2017 academic year, attracted 40 percent of the eligible students in its first year, despite the small number of available programs and the high standards for student eligibility. This year more available programs raise the expectations for a larger group of participants.
- G. Fifty percent of students who transfer from community colleges to state universities or UMass campuses transfer without an associate's degree. The Reverse Transfer Program, approved by the Board of Higher Education last December, provides students with an opportunity to earn their associate's degrees after they transfer. The Reverse Transfer website will be launched this fall.
- H. The Community College Transfer Principles provide a model for the state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses to develop their own common transfer principles. Over the current academic year, transfer professionals from around the state will work toward adoption of their common transfer principles.
- I. The strength of the work on MassTransfer is the collaborative process that has led to the expansion and transformation of the MassTransfer programs. DHE convenes the appropriate people from each campus, but the work is done by faculty and transfer professionals on those campuses. Throughout this system-wide approach, the focus remains on students and improving their transfer experience.
- J. The goals for the day consist of the following:
  1. Cycle IV Nursing and Social Work/Human Services faculty will break into separate groups, led by segmental leaders from community colleges, state universities and UMass campuses, to identify the foundational courses in their fields of study.
  2. Cycle I segmental leaders will review the A2B pathways they created and identify any revisions that seem necessary to maintain the currency of the pathways.
  3. Transfer professionals will review recent revisions to the implementation guidelines for MassTransfer and Commonwealth Commitment, the operation of the A2B pathways and the status of the Reverse Transfer website.

IV. **Questions and Answer Session:** Elena demonstrated online the operation of the A2B website to give faculty an idea of how their pathway maps will look by the fall of 2019. She used the example of the Criminal Justice pathway from Berkshire Community College to Bridgewater State University to illustrate that the task for the day is to identify the foundational courses that students must take in their first two years of study toward a bachelor's degree. The goal is to make every credit and every course count to ensure affordable bachelor's degrees for today's students.

- A. Currently over 2,700 articulation agreements exist among the Massachusetts public institutions of higher education. Eventually DHE plans to sunset many of those agreements and replace them with the statewide A2B pathways.

- B. Faculty should identify not only the courses in Nursing and Social Work that students should take in their first two years of study, but also those courses outside of Nursing and Social Work that are necessary to take.
  - C. Elena reviewed the materials in the folders for each participant and cautioned participants not to worry too much about the accuracy of the data. They are intended only as starting points for the conversation.
  - D. Elena thanked the transfer professionals and registrars, as well as the faculty, for their participation in the conference and directed everyone to their appropriate rooms.
- V. **Political Science**
- A. Attendees: Eric Budd, Fitchburg State University; Don Kilguss, Bristol Community College
  - B. Summary: The segmental leaders convened and were asked to review the original A2B Mapped Pathway in Political Science. After reviewing the foundational courses (American Government, Comparative Government, International Relations, State and Local Government), there was agreement to keep the original foundational courses and the requirement that students complete three of the four before transferring. The segmental leaders also noted that the core course components remained relevant and provide the key factual information but also give faculty flexibility/discretion in discussing the course content. The team noted they were unaware of any issues related to the pathway.
  - C. Change Requested:
    - 1. Adding a Statistics course to satisfy the Quantitative Reasoning/Mathematics requirement of the General Education Foundation