

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Assessment and Accountability

NO.: AAC 07-23

COMMITTEE DATE: April 12, 2007

BOARD DATE: April 19, 2007

MOVED:

The Board of Higher Education endorses the seamless transfer of college-level credit among the Commonwealth's public higher education institutions and the improved coordination in implementing an effective and efficient transfer system. It is the intent of the Board that college-level credit granted by a Massachusetts public higher education institution shall be accepted, where appropriate, toward a degree as transfer credit across the institutions.

The Board of Higher Education establishes the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group to assess current transfer barriers and to make recommendations on improving the effectiveness of transfer across the Commonwealth's public higher education system.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9

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April 2007

Background

The Board of Higher Education has long played a role in facilitating student transfer within the Commonwealth's system of higher education since the establishment of the Commonwealth Transfer Compact¹ in 1974, last revised in 1990. The Board of Higher Education and the campuses later worked together to create additional initiatives to enable students to move from the associate degree to the baccalaureate degree, including the Joint Admissions Agreements,² the Tuition Advantage Program,³ and the Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education Transfer Compacts.⁴

These initiatives are aimed at easing the transition and providing incentives for students who first complete an associate degree at a community college. While this is and continues to be an important pathway, transfer is a growing and increasingly complex trend at both the national and state level. A report released last year by the U.S. Department of Education found that nearly 60 percent of students from the high school class of 1992 attended more than one college. Additionally, students are likely to transfer from their community college prior to graduation, which means that the traditional transition from associate's degree to baccalaureate degree is becoming less typical. For example, in fall 2005, a total of 2,394 Massachusetts community college students transferred to one of the public state colleges or University of Massachusetts campuses (1,715 and 679 respectively). Of this total, nearly half transferred before earning an associate degree. The Board of Higher Education recognizes that transfer represents a vital path to earning degrees in the Commonwealth, and this process must be supported for all students.

A recently filed bill (H 1175), calls for the establishment of course-to-course equivalencies for 30 credits of general education courses; the creation of a user-friendly Web site listing course-to-course equivalencies, articulation agreements, and transfer reports; and the formation of an oversight committee to develop and implement these measures and evaluate effectiveness of transfer. The BHE supports the general objectives of the bill and believes that smooth transfer depends upon the ability of our public institutions to work together because transfer raises core issues of course quality and comparability, student support and success, and common administrative and technological processes. Ongoing and joint efforts will be needed in the development of an improved transfer system.

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues that affect transfer and to make recommendations on steps that can be implemented to improve transfer, the Board of Higher

1 The Commonwealth Transfer Compact (CTC) is intended to guarantee the transfer of all credits taken at the community college and to give eligible students full junior standing at the receiving institution. Eligibility for the CTC is reserved for students who complete an associate degree with a minimum of 60 credits and a minimum grade point average of 2.0 and who complete a minimum 35 credit general education core.

2 Students who enroll at a Massachusetts Community College in an approved joint admissions associate's degree program are conditionally accepted by the University campus or state college with which there is an agreement. Eligibility is reserved for students who earn a minimum 2.5 cumulative grade point average (based on a 4.0 scale) and an associate's degree in an approved joint admissions associate degree program.

3 Students eligible for the Tuition Advantage Program are entitled to a tuition waiver equal to 33% of the resident tuition rate at the University campus or state college for the two (2) years which immediately follow their community college enrollment. Eligibility is reserved for students who completed an associate degree at a public community college within the prior calendar year as a participant in a Joint Admissions Program with a minimum of a 3.0 cumulative grade point average.

4 The education compacts combine features from the Commonwealth Transfer Compact and Joint Admissions to ensure the transfer of credit and guaranteed admissions of eligible students.

Education will establish the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group to complete the following objectives:

- Evaluate the Commonwealth's current policies and practices
- Diagnose barriers associated with transfer
- Compare and assess policies and practices enacted in other states
- Recommend policies and practices to remedy transfer barriers
- Identify costs associated with proposed solutions.

The Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group shall be chaired by the Chancellor of the Board of Higher Education or her designee and shall include:

- 6 faculty members (two from each segment with representation from high enrollment fields including business management and administration, health professions, and education as well as expertise in general education)
- 3 chief academic officers (one from each segment)
- 3 transfer directors or coordinators (one from each segment)
- 4 members of the Joint Admissions Executive Committee
- 2 representatives from the Joint Committee on Higher Education (Senate and House)
- 3 representatives from independent or regional groups with interest and experience in transfer issues

The Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group will meet on a regular basis from June 2007 through March 2008 and shall report its findings and recommendations to the Chancellor who shall present the findings and recommendations to the Board of Higher Education no later than the June 2008 meeting.