

- Questions for DHE:** **We are doing this for the students, but can we define who these students are, especially with regard to dual enrollment students (those participating in CLEP, Gateway, and other types of programs) – how do dual enrollment credits transfer?**
- DHE Response: For the purposes of this conversation, we are not discussing dual enrollment students – the focus is on the transition between 2- and 4-year institutions, but there are specific issues related to dual enrollment students that need to be addressed.
- Question:** **How are you dealing with different course and grade requirements for students entering different majors (minimum GPAs and grades for specific courses)?**
- SUNY Response: At SUNY, a C was the grade that would be transferable – a campus could make the decision to accept a lower grade, and the exception was that if a campus required a higher grade for native students, the same criteria should be applied to transfer students as well.
- Comment from participant: But even for native students, if the grade has to be higher within the given major, then that has impact as well.
- Comment from participant: This is an interesting issue – the substantial majority of community colleges do not accept C- grades for transfer, and the substantial majority of 4-year institutions do accept this grade, which was surprising – so this is an issue that needs to be dealt with especially within the context of reverse transfer.
- Question:** **Is this a policy for the community colleges that is being addressed?**
- Response from participant: Yes – at MassBay for example, information about this difference was shared with faculty members, and there is growing recognition of the need to change the minimum grade for all community colleges, and some campuses' faculty governance committees have already made the decision to accept the C-.
- Response from SUNY: For the engineering pathway at SUNY, credit caps of 64 and 126 were established, which presented challenges for engineering, so the engineering faculty group had concerns about fitting their courses within these parameters – the result of which was a University-wide waiver for engineering at 68 credits and also a University-wide agreement among the 2- and 4- year institutions to have 5 instead of 7 categories for gen ed courses.
- Comment from participant: Perhaps we could administer a survey to determine which offices on campuses are providing transfer services to students including admissions, registrar, transfer advising at community colleges.

Question: **What about articulation within the context of this discussion, and who should be responsible?**

Response from SUNY: We received a Lumina grant to support reverse transfer and create a process for evaluating transcripts for entry into community colleges, and a reverse transfer expert conducted site visits to campuses to collect more comprehensive information. We discovered wide variance with regard to who addressed these issues.

There is a need to create data systems. At SUNY, very few campuses collected and maintained accurate data about reverse transfer and articulation.

Comment from participant: MAST is a response to this issue – the creation of the state database in particular will be invaluable to addressing data and other issues, especially the tendency to rely on “oral tradition”.

Question: **But what about statewide articulation agreements, and Chapter 74 agreements for vocational and technical high schools? It seems that there are differences between the 2- and 4-year institutions with regard to accepting credits from vocational and technical high schools, which is an issue both with regard to policy and messaging.**

Response from participant: We need to add this issue to our list of issues that need to be addressed – and we need to go beyond and look at everything at the community colleges, not just those that feed into articulation agreements.

Response from SUNY: At SUNY, we emphasized the AA and AS degrees as our areas of focus. We could not also focus on AAS and other specialized degrees that did not have equivalents at the 4-year institutions, and it was important to focus our students as well.

Comment from participant: But we need to examine the statewide articulation agreements, which might lessen the burden a bit and increase consistency.

Questions: **How do we feel about articulation programs overall? I keep hearing about 2,400+ programs, but do you feel like having the pathways would assist in reducing the number of articulation agreements that we have?**

Response from SUNY: At SUNY, absolutely – we have articulation agreements all over the place, and they are not being maintained much at all, we are using the new website.

Questions: **How many programs do you have per area, and how many transfer students do you have within areas? If you have three sending and receiving campuses, do you want to introduce bureaucratic overhead by creating an articulation agreement? Or do you create system-level mechanisms? Campus to campus agreements can be quite robust, so the strategy could depend on a variety of issues.**

In terms of getting upper administrative buy-in, especially when they see articulation agreements as a measure of success, how did you deal with this at SUNY?

Response from SUNY: We did not have issues with administrators, their buy-in was there – the issues were with faculty members. There were a couple of campuses which had created huge articulation databases and they did not want to give them up even though they were difficult for students, but for the most part, not having to do these agreements was a huge relief, so they were happy to have them on the computer.

Question: **Having something simple that is focused on the way in which we advise students should guide our work. How do you change the culture regarding articulation agreements, how do we make the pathways the next tool?**

Response from participant: But the creation of the pathways that link 2- and 4-year institutions eliminates the need for the individual articulation agreements, so the pathways and the advising information is still there.

Response from participant: If you are a community college that works with 4 different schools with different views, and given that many students do not necessarily know what their course taking pathways will be, there are difficulties.

Questions: **We have a challenge with full-time day and face-to-face enrollment versus continuing ed divisions. From the 2-year side, we find ourselves advising and orienting students to the distinction (which varies across institutions) and the impact on enrollment, but we should streamline our approach, and how did SUNY address these issues?**

Response from SUNY: Our state policies are built more to facilitate full-time day enrollment, but we always have a consistent portion of students who are choosing other options such as day and evening, full-time enrollment. Our policies do allow for exceptions and institutional autonomy – this becomes an issue with students and advising them appropriately.

Question: **At SUNY, were there continuing ed and evening programs?**

Response from SUNY: Our continuing ed programs are non-credit, so the evening courses are part of the regular program administered by the same academic officer on the campus.

For our smaller community colleges, after the pathways were created, we realized that some campuses did not have all of the required courses. With the new tools, the campuses can immediately recognize gaps, and students are encouraged to stay on the home campus and as necessary, take additional classes online.

Questions: Do we need to be more explicit about which students we are talking about? What about the MassTransfer block, which is not contingent upon earning the AA/AS, as opposed to the previous Commonwealth Transfer Compact, which did require graduation?

Response from participant: There are regional and campus issues – for MassTransfer, most of our community college students have completed 50 credits, but depending on where your community college is, we have students from different areas and they are very comfortable stating that they have the funds, they want to enroll early. But we need to be thoughtful about advising students to complete associate’s degrees, since those who complete them are more likely to also complete a bachelor’s degree.

Response from participant: We need more data about MassTransfer. If you complete the transfer block, then it means that you have passed college level math, which is a big deal, so it is not like someone drifted off and did not complete math – that is a different cohort of students.

Questions: At SUNY, how do individual schools honor the pathways? Are they binding? Are there any issues with regard to institutions actually accepting different courses than the established equivalents?

Response from SUNY: We have an appeal process for students – the policy states very clearly that the course must count toward the major.

There may be a situation where the accepting institution does not require the same course for the major, but if the campus does not require that particular course, then the entering student has to receive the balance for the credits somewhere else.

We can also build the data to verify compliance from our system.

Question: Who hears the appeals at SUNY?

Response from SUNY: Two levels – campus level first, we require all campuses to have an appeals process and also publish information on their websites with a link to the system office, the process is quite informal and issues are

usually resolved. The majority of appeals are based on incorrect information to be honest – but in cases where campuses are not following policy, the issues are again resolved more informally. Do you collect student unit record data at the system level, the courses that students have taken?

Response from participant: Yes – HEIRS does provide that data. HEIRS is the DHE database system from which reports are produced using course and student information sent by the state universities and community colleges.

Comment from SUNY: At SUNY we have the data on students plus transfer, so you can actually see patterns to see that if students have been taking particular courses at particular institutions, and they are moving into particular programs, you can identify alignment and transfer issues.

Since you have three different systems, if you could work together through the transfer specialists group, to get approval from each of the boards to have a joint appeals committee with one member from each segment – you could settle issues right away. At SUNY, there were very few issues that needed responses from senior level administrators. With the appeals process, you reduce anxiety, provide accurate information – it gives people more confidence in the system, and you learn about specific issues.

Question: **We are entrepreneurial at the community colleges, so my psych department may have 10 courses. If we decide that we need only 2 to advance to a 4-year institution, have you seen cases of compression and course reduction?**

Response from SUNY: Yes – there is a shift in what courses were being offered, but at SUNY, no faculty members lost their jobs, but there are ongoing conversations about full and adjunct faculty members, and who will teach the courses. We have several huge community colleges that pay really well, they offer many specialized courses, and there the administration has not been able to push back yet.

Response from SUNY: At SUNY, the system did not impose – the campuses drove the discussions, the campus discussions revealed that there are multiple issues that need to be addressed.

Question: **With regard to the six areas – how will they play at the community colleges versus the state universities with regard to prerequisites and other issues?**

Response from SUNY: The biology area – the biology students must have the mathematics and chemistry courses prior to transfer, and at SUNY we found that if the student was going to major in the field when they transferred, that then

you had to go with the higher standard (calculus versus pre-calculus). If a student is entering into another major, you could have different conversations about course transfer.

Questions: **How did you handle expiration of lab courses or computer science courses? We are seeing more and more adult learners on our campuses – did you address this issue?**

Response from SUNY: The big thing that did come up is that for our basic science courses for the major, all had to require the lab, that is the new standard. Biologists did discuss having a time window, a 10-year window, but eventually that evaporated because we are only talking about core courses versus electives, so we did not end up with any time limits.

Question: **What about the modality of courses? For example, the biology department is very comfortable with online laboratories but at the chemistry department it is not allowed.**

Response from SUNY: At SUNY, biology, chemistry, and geology did not accept online labs – they had to be in-person labs. Engineering accepts some online labs, and the physicists seem to be open.

In the first round of talks, nobody was in support of online labs – it was a hot topic – bio, environmental science and chemistry that said that online labs will not be accepted, they submitted the language to us [the system]. The language created issues, so it was changed to “online labs are not guaranteed for transfer”. Engineers indicated that they would guarantee transfer, but it is an ongoing issue – we are exploring guidelines and criteria for reviewing online labs.

Question: **If you are not returning for the afternoon session – any questions or issues that need to be addressed?**

Response from participant: Primary concerns are: 1) by creating this pathways program, do the individual campuses lose individuality, and students will regard all 4-year institutions as the same with the same course?
2) when a 4-year decides to change curricula, how would the change affect the agreement?

Comment from SUNY: At SUNY, this was a red herring issue – our campuses said that “we are so unique”. But we compared the catalogs across institutions, and examined catalogs for the private institutions to which our students transferred, and we discovered that they are the same – the same four or five courses are usually offered. The differentiation occurs at the upper levels. With regard to campus-level changes, these are generally four courses within the major that students will take within the first two

years – so if the home campus changes one of these courses, adjustments can be made.

Afternoon Session

The primary purpose of this session was twofold: first, to discuss the specific pathways and identify issues or questions that should be addressed; and second, to identify primary challenges that may be identified in the other discussions, and discuss how transfer specialists can respond to these challenges. The session opened with comments about participants' informal conversations with their colleagues during the lunch break, and they reported that there were "mixed opinions" about the morning sessions and the extent to which they were productive.

FEEDBACK RE: HISTORY

Comment from participant: We have a potential challenge – if some schools offer three sections of U.S. History versus one or two, people will have concerns about U.S. History only versus world history, art history, and other types of history courses.

Comment from participant: Perhaps the solution is to provide a menu of history courses, of which several can count towards transfer.

FEEDBACK RE: POLITICAL SCIENCE

Comment from participant: There are concerns about differentiation among schools between the content of courses and curricula – some schools offer intro to politics/intro to political science courses while others do not, plus there are distinctions between different strands within the discipline.

FEEDBACK RE: ECONOMICS

Comment from participant: There are definitely differences between the segments with regard to the types and sequence of economics courses – so there are concerns about numbering and sequencing, and the placement of courses within the first two years.

Comment from participant: There are also concerns about mathematics. Which mathematics courses require pre-calculus as a prerequisite? The core could be micro, macro, and pre-calculus in order to enroll in 4-year degree programs – but this could be an issue for the community colleges. Some schools require pre-calculus in order to enroll in either micro- or macro-economics courses, which could present issues.

FEEDBACK RE: PSYCHOLOGY

Comment from participant: Statistics and research methods courses could be a significant issue. For example, community colleges may not offer these courses, and at some 4-year institutions such as UMass Amherst, pre-calculus is a prerequisite for the psychology statistics course.

Comment from participant: Key question for 4-year institutions – are pre-calculus and calculus appropriate prerequisites? Key question for 2-year institutions – do we need to offer additional courses?

Comment from participant: There are concerns about human development courses and alignment with other courses.

Comment from participant: We could possibly think of these courses within the context of meta-majors – thinking about the consistency of statistics and other courses within the context of the social sciences, which does not limit our ability to think specifically about major requirements. A quantitative methods course that could be accepted by multiple majors within a meta-major as opposed to separate methods for each major could be the answer. But many campuses currently offer separate courses that are not necessarily aligned with one another.

Comment from participant: We need to convey the importance of thinking more broadly to the other groups – this is an essential concept that should be explored further, and it can be applied to multiple issues.

This could be an opportunity for curricular innovation at both 2- and 4-year institutions, it could be transformative to think more broadly.

FEEDBACK RE: BIOLOGY

Comment from participant: I heard a concern on the part of a faculty member about how to appropriately sequence prerequisites and required courses?

Comment from participant: What is the impact of these discussions on advising students? If “cognates” are listed on an academic pathways webpage, we can counsel students appropriately about the sequence of courses and electives that they should take – and they will arrive better prepared.

Comment from participant: Second semester bio courses during the sophomore year – the course is only offered once per year, some students are oftentimes waiting because it is a prerequisite to upper level biology courses – not because the credits did not transfer, but because of the timing of offering the courses.

Fall versus spring transfer should be examined - timing is important.

FEEDBACK RE: CHEMISTRY

Comment from participant: The sequencing issue again is significant – if students are coming in with gen chem I and they have to wait until the spring to enroll in gen chem II, that will affect their ability to transfer. In addition, there are concerns about the pre-calculus/calculus versus non-calculus based pathways.

Therefore, it seems that it is important to clearly identify which courses have pre-calculus and calculus prerequisites. But how should this information be conveyed to students, and how would this information affect how we advise students? What about students who do not need these classes?

Comment from participant: It is important to provide more information rather than less – we think that the information is clear, but oftentimes students need additional information.

ACTION ITEMS AND NEXT STEPS

Questions for DHE: **What types of information will we receive, will we receive information about the discussions in the other groups as well?**

Response from DHE: DHE will summarize the information from all of the groups, and the information will be shared with everyone for feedback, and then the final document will be shared. We will be transparent and open, and we need to make sure that we are being thoughtful about the stages of these discussions – focusing first on credits, courses, and transfer, and then exploring issues related to competencies. The DHE will set up mechanisms for discipline-based conversations, which will include the transfer specialists and others.

Comment from participant: The CAOs must be deeply engaged in this work – the presidents and other senior administrators must be fully aware of the next steps.

Question: **Would you be willing to have smaller convenings with faculty members, senior administrators, and others?**

Comment from participant: Yes – we could absolutely do that, but the meetings would need to be convened by senior administrators.

Comment from participant: It is essential to continue our discussions with faculty members – one important outcome is enhancing our ability to advise students more effectively.

Comment from participant: These issues are timely and there is more interest in engaging in these issues – ongoing work through MAST could prompt new discussions, and this group are essential to future conversations.

Questions: **What supports do you need to do this work? What are we willing to do?**

Comment from participant: Can we have access to the different matrices so that you can compare the pathways and prerequisites? We can ask faculty to meet with us, but we cannot make them.

Response from DHE: The spring meetings will not be similar in composition. The discipline experts will meet by discipline to finalize decisions about course content and sequencing.

Question: **So after these spring meetings we will have drafts of the pathways by discipline?**

Response from DHE: We will have the foundational courses for each of the disciplines.

Question: **What is DHE hearing about the work?**

Response from DHE: In economics, there was a discussion about the cognates and the calculus prerequisite – and then the discussion turned to competencies, which again should be a later conversation. Once the group began to discuss issues across the sectors, the conversation became more valuable and more specific with regard to course alignment and offerings. In general, people are engaged and they are seeing discrepancies across the campuses; I do not know to what extent they are addressing these discrepancies, but at least they are becoming aware of them.

In chemistry, they will probably identify the foundational courses by the end of the day, and they are also using MassTransfer to guide their work. History may be close to done as well, and the foundational courses could include U.S. History I and II, plus World History and potentially other courses for the first two years.

One issue in the economics session – even though the matrices were similar for UMass and the state universities, there was some misalignment in terms of how specific courses were placed, so it might be helpful to realign certain courses.

Questions: **What is the distinction between academic pathways and MassTransfer? What is the message moving forward? The integration of a new policy to integrate with MassTransfer? Are we in agreement with this message, especially given potential disagreements on our campuses?**

Response from DHE: My general observation is that we want to make sure that whatever the disciplines do, that the work is aligned with MassTransfer. We need to

talk about the first two years and those 60 credits – which is again why you are essential to this work, because the discipline experts may not be as knowledgeable about these issues.

Question: **What did the discipline experts receive?**

Response from DHE: Each group received matrices that were created by the 4-year institutions.

Questions: **So is it our job to integrate these documents into MassTransfer? So we need to understand that the students are meeting the pathways plus the MassTransfer requirements?**

Response from DHE: Yes – the job of the transfer specialists is to understand all requirements and ensure alignment and integration, especially given that some faculty members may not have a deep understanding of specific issues and requirements.

Question: **Is there a sense that we are looking for uniform expectations from all of the state universities and the UMass system?**

Response from DHE: No, we are not looking for uniformity, we are too complex a system to expect one pathway per discipline. But when there is divergence from one sector to another, we should be able to explain those differences – why UMass Amherst requires calculus for economics, for example. But how do you explain when one state university accepts a course from all community colleges and another state university does not accept any? That is too far out of balance, we cannot explain this discrepancy. The pressure that we are seeing from the legislature is largely occurring because the constituent base that is complaining is going to a legislator directly – that is what we are hearing. At SUNY, 95% of similar cases were addressed by an appeals group, so we may think about creating this type of function so that we can answer these questions before they reach legislators. The group would involve campuses and DHE as some sort of arbiter, and it would be useful to have representatives from the three sectors to provide guidance about how to address these issues.

Comment from participant: You would have unilateral support from transfer professionals to establish this type of group – there is willingness to participate, and there could be a dynamic set up whereby those who participate are rewarded.

Questions: **Are the professors going to talk about sciences and the liberal arts? Many community college students are interested in generalist degrees, and they may not fit into the specific pathways.**

Question: **One consequence of this work may be the elimination of the**

general degree?

Response from participant: At MCLA, a high population of our transfer students are interested in interdisciplinary studies, with a more general approach, so we will need to grapple with this issue.

Response from participant: UMass Amherst has discussed a liberal studies degree several times and dismissed it, since they believe that a bachelor's degree should include both depth and breadth.

Questions: What is December 19th deadline? What will this mean given that the groups are meeting in the spring? The templates will be used to form the publishable pathways documents, yes?

Response from DHE: The initial templates are based on the majors and foundational courses – so for each institution, we should feel comfortable that the information is correct.

Response from DHE: The campuses will need to continue to adjust these documents – and we may not be able to meet the deadline given that certain issues will need to be addressed by faculty governance.

There should be a baseline level of agreement by the deadline – but campuses should inform us if there are issues that will not be resolved by the 19th.