

DISCUSSION AGENDA

A. Academic Affairs

1. Act on Proposed Associate-to-Baccalaureate Program Transfer Plan

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Summary

This issue paper explores and examines the challenges and potential opportunities associated with associate-to-baccalaureate degree program transfer. The paper addresses three core components that are critical in establishing a systemwide associate-to-baccalaureate transfer framework and outlines proposed recommendations.

Background

In recent years, Kansas has established systemwide transfer (SWT) as a robust transfer framework for individual courses. The SWT inventory is comprised of 100 courses that transfer among the 32 public colleges and universities in Kansas. This system exists in conjunction with a long-standing tradition of Kansas community colleges playing a vital role in supporting baccalaureate degree completion. In 2019, Kansas ranked second in the nation in the percentage of baccalaureate degree earners who started at two-year public colleges.⁶

While Kansas has built an effective model for individual course transfer and has a documented history of students progressing from two-year colleges to universities, the state does not currently have a systemwide policy or strategy that advances associate-to-baccalaureate degree program transfer. Seeing an opportunity for growth, the Board directed Board staff to collaborate with colleges and universities to design a systemwide transfer framework at the programmatic level.

A systemwide program transfer approach is intended to preserve credits and establish a clear transfer pathway between two-year colleges and universities.⁷ As a result, this approach creates a concrete trajectory in which all courses completed within an earned associate degree transfer and apply toward the completion of specific baccalaureate degree requirements. Implementing a systemwide associate-to-baccalaureate transfer model is advantageous to students, states, universities, and community colleges for a multitude of reasons. Among others, the benefits include:

Benefits to the Student

- Provides a shorter path to completion, thereby reducing time-to-degree⁸
- Decreases the cost of the degree⁸
- Creates more flexibility and increases options for students⁹

Benefits to the State

- Increases efficiencies and reduces course redundancy⁹
- Saves state costs associated with excessive credits⁸
- Aligns with the KBOR Strategic Plan – Promotes affordability, retention, and completion

⁶ National Student Clearinghouse. (2019). *Completing college-state-2019*. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/signature-report-16-state-supplement-completing-college-a-state-level-view-of-student-completion-rates/>

⁷ Gross, B., & Goldhaber, D. D. (2009). *Community college transfer and articulation policies: Looking beneath the surface*. Bothell, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington.

⁸ Root, M. (2013). *Essential elements of state policy for college completion*. Retrieved from http://publications.sreb.org/2013/013_ess_lem_tran_courses.pdf

⁹ Kisker, C. B., Wagoner, R. L., & Cohen, A. M. (2012). Elements of effective transfer associate degrees. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2012(160), 5-11.

Benefits to the University

- Provides an opportunity to attract more non-traditional students as universities adapt to recruiting from smaller high school graduating classes¹⁰
- Establishes an opportunity to have a larger population of junior transfer students, which could increase the demand for upper-division coursework¹⁰
- Simplifies transfer student advising and streamlines degree audits because the transferability has previously been determined¹¹
- Creates opportunities to increase baccalaureate degree completion (transfer students who have an associate degree are more likely to earn a baccalaureate degree)¹²

Benefits to the Community College

- Creates opportunity to increase associate degree completion¹³
- Simplifies transfer student advising¹¹

Core Components in a Systemwide Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfer Framework

A review of practitioner and scholarly literature revealed that three components are commonly cited when establishing a systemwide associate-to-baccalaureate program transfer model.

- Developing a common general education (GE) package^{8,9}
- Creating a framework in which program courses transfer as a block without the loss of credit^{7,8}
- Examining associate and/or baccalaureate degree credit limits⁹

A description of each component, as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with it, are detailed herein.

Developing a Common General Education Package

A common general education package “is the foundation upon which transfer associate degrees are built, and is key to achieving statewide gains in efficiency and cost savings.”⁹ Accordingly, many states have established a common general education framework that guarantees a transferable associate degree automatically satisfies the receiving university's general education requirements.

A breakdown of systemwide general education packages in nine states is detailed below.

State	Total Common General Education Hours	Link to General Education Package
Arkansas	35 Hours	Arkansas GE Package
Colorado	35 Hours	Colorado GE Package
State	Total Common General Education Hours	Link to General Education Package
Florida	36 Hours	Florida GE Package
Iowa	40 Hours	Iowa GE Package
Maryland	30-36 Hours	Maryland GE Package

¹⁰ Jenkins, D., Kadlec, A., & Votruba, J. (2014). *Maximizing resources for student success: The business case for regional public universities to strengthen community college transfer pathways*. Retrieved from http://hcmstrategists.com/maximizingresources/images/Transfer_Pathways_Paper.pdf

¹¹ Manz, N. (2015). *The transfer handbook: promoting student success*. Washington, DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

¹² Shapiro, D., Dunder, A., Ziskin, M., Chiang, Y.-C., Chen, J., Harrell, A., & Torres, V. (2013). *Baccalaureate attainment: A national view of the postsecondary outcomes of students who transfer from two-year to four-year institutions* (Signature Report No. 5). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

¹³ Spencer, G. (2017). *Improving transfer pathways: the impact of statewide articulation policies* (Doctoral dissertation).

Missouri	42 Hours	Missouri GE Package
Oklahoma	36 Hours	Oklahoma GE Package
Pennsylvania	30 Hours	Pennsylvania GE Package
Tennessee	41 Hours	Tennessee GE Package

In contrast to these states, Kansas does not currently have a policy guaranteeing that completing a transferable associate degree satisfies baccalaureate general education requirements. While there is no such policy concerning associate degrees, current Board policy specifies that a combination of transfer courses should be recognized as completing general education requirements at state universities and Washburn University.

It should be noted that the combination of courses detailed in policy is dated and does not align with general education requirements used by many Kansas colleges and universities. As an example, this combination of courses requires 45 total hours, including nine hours of science courses. These requirements exceed what is currently prescribed by many Kansas colleges and universities and surpass the credit hour parameters established in the aforementioned systemwide general education packages.

Recommendation

It will be critical to develop a policy that addresses both general education requirements and how such requirements will apply within an associate-to-baccalaureate transfer framework. Therefore, it is recommended that a working group develop a proposed policy that:

- defines a common general education package for transferable associate degrees; and
- guarantees that a transferable associate degree is used to satisfy the general education at the receiving baccalaureate-degree granting university.
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The proposed working group is detailed below:

University Members		Two-Year College Members	
Emporia State University	Gaile Stephens, Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences	Allen County Community College	Jon Marshall, Vice-President for Academic Affairs
Fort Hays State University	Tim Crowley, Associate Provost	Butler Community College	Lori Winningham, Vice President of Academics
Kansas State University	Brian Niehoff, Associate Provost	Coffeyville Community College	Aron Potter, Vice President for Academic Services
Pittsburg State University	Melinda Roelfs, Registrar	Cowley County Community College	Michelle Schoon, Vice President of Academic Affairs
University of Kansas	Barbara Bichelmeyer, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor	Flint Hills Tech	Steve Loewen, Vice President of Instructional Services
Wichita State University	Linnea GlenMaye, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs	Highland Community College	Erin Shaw, Vice President for Academic Affairs
Washburn University	Jennifer Ball, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs	Johnson County Community College	Cathy Almai-Mahurin, Director of Career/Transfer Services

Creating a framework in which program courses transfer as a block without the loss of credit

In Kansas, transferring a block of program courses has primarily been based upon a university establishing a set of bilateral agreements with community colleges. Thus, if a university wishes to establish a program transfer agreement with each community college in the state, it must develop 19 individual agreements. This is cumbersome for universities and community colleges and necessitates ongoing oversight because any program change made by either party triggers a need to re-examine and revise the agreement.

In addition to bilateral agreements with community colleges, universities also have transfer guides that specify program-specific courses from community colleges that will transfer. While this is a helpful resource, a transfer guide does not guarantee that community college credits will transfer because it may change between the point at which the student took the course at the community college and the date in which he/she is admitted to the university.¹⁴

On account of the challenges and limitations associated with transferring program-specific courses, multiple states have established systemwide associate degrees in which a block of program-specific courses transfer and apply toward the completion of baccalaureate degrees in like programs.⁹ This has been executed by using pre-major and early-major courses to 1) fulfill the program portion of associate of arts/science degrees and 2) satisfy specific baccalaureate degree course requirements, without the loss of credit. This model aligns program-specific courses across community colleges and universities, which, in turn, reduces course overlap and eliminates the need to repeat similar courses at the university.

The states that are often cited as having effective systemwide associate-to-baccalaureate transfer models are detailed below.

State	Total Systemwide Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfer Programs
California	38 Programs
Colorado	36 Programs
Connecticut	27 Programs
Ohio	51 Programs
Pennsylvania	25 Programs
Tennessee	57 Programs

A review of these associate-to-baccalaureate program transfer inventories revealed that there are many common program areas among the states. The common associate-to-baccalaureate transfer program areas are highlighted below.

All Six States	
Implemented the following as Systemwide Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfer Programs	
1. Business	6. English
2. Biology	7. History
3. Chemistry	8. Political Science
4. Criminal Justice	9. Psychology
5. Early Childhood Education	10. Sociology
Five out of the Six States	
Implemented the following as Systemwide Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfer Programs	
1. Communications	5. Physics
2. Computer Science	6. Social Work
3. Geography	7. Spanish/Modern Languages

¹⁴ Schudde, L. (2019). *Why Texas should mandate that associate degree credits can be readily transferred from two- to four-year colleges*. Retrieved from <https://scholars.org/contribution/why-texas-should-mandate-associate-degree-credits-can-be-readily-transferred-two-four>

4. Philosophy	8. Theatre
Multiple States Implemented the following as Systemwide Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfer Programs	
1. Accounting	12. Exercise Science
2. Agriculture Business	13. Finance
3. Agriculture Plant Sciences	14. Geology
4. Animal Science	15. Information Systems
5. Art	16. Journalism
6. Art History	17. Marketing
7. Economics	18. Management
8. Elementary Education	19. Music
9. Engineering	20. Nursing
10. Engineering Technology	21. Nutrition and Dietetics
11. Environmental Science	22. Secondary Education

Nearly all these states have created degree sheets that detail the associate degree course requirements within systemwide associate-to-baccalaureate transfer programs. Examples of systemwide associate degree sheets in common program areas are detailed below.

State	Systemwide Program
Colorado	Business
Connecticut	Biology
Ohio	Psychology
Pennsylvania	Criminal Justice
Tennessee	Early Childhood Education

In addition to highlighting the common program areas in other states, it is also essential to recognize the common program areas selected by Kansas students who have transferred from community colleges to state universities. When reviewing the fall enrollment data between 2014 and 2018:

- 51% of incoming state university students who transferred from a community college were enrolled in 10-program areas;
- 61% of incoming state university students who transferred from a community college were enrolled in 15-program areas; and
- 75% of incoming state university students who transferred from a community college were enrolled in 30-program areas.

These data show that much of the incoming community college transfer student population were concentrated in select program areas. To provide more context, the five-year enrollment averages for the top 30 program areas selected by community college students who transferred to state universities in the fall between 2014 and 2018 are detailed below.

Top 30 Programs Selected by Community College Students Who Transferred to Universities	5 Year Average
Teacher Education and Professional Development, Specific Levels and Methods	294.4
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities	255.8
Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing	193
Psychology, General	139.8
Business Administration, Management and Operations	136.8
Social Work	99.6
Biology, General	97
Accounting and Related Services	97

Teacher Education and Professional Development, Specific Subject Areas	78
Health and Physical Education/Fitness	74.8
Criminal Justice and Corrections	64
Communication, General	58.2
Animal Sciences	54.2
Mechanical Engineering	53.8
Fine and Studio Arts	53.2
Marketing	44.8
Agricultural Business and Management	43
Computer and Information Sciences, General	36.4
Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention, And Treatment Professions	34.4
Finance and Financial Management Services	33.8
English Language and Literature, General	33.6
Business/Commerce, General	32.4
Sociology	32.2
Construction Management	20.8
Political Science and Government	20.8
History	20.8
Communication Disorders Sciences and Services	20.4
Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General	19.2
Design and Applied Arts	17.8
Human Resources Management and Services	13.8

When considering these data in relation to the systemwide program inventories in other states, it should be noted that nearly all the top 30 programs selected by community college students who transferred to state universities are classified by multiple states as associate-to-baccalaureate transfer programs.

Recommendation

Kansas has a tremendous opportunity to create a systemwide approach to support program transfer. Before any concrete steps are taken, it will be vital to establish the foundational components that are needed to construct a robust systemwide associate-to-baccalaureate transfer initiative.

After the proposed working group establishes a common general education package, it is recommended that the proposed working group:

- develops a conceptual framework for a systemwide associate-to-baccalaureate transfer initiative;
- identifies the potential programs for a systemwide associate-to-baccalaureate transfer initiative; and
- establishes a proposed timeline for creating and implementing systemwide associate-to-baccalaureate transfer programs.

Examining Associate and/or Baccalaureate Degree Credit Limits

Current policy states that a “Baccalaureate degree” means a degree:

(a) Requiring the equivalent of at least four academic years of full-time postsecondary study consisting of courses totaling a minimum of 120 semester credit hours in the liberal arts, sciences or professional fields.

(b) Incorporating in its program design the equivalent of two or more academic years of full-time study consisting of courses totaling a minimum of 60 semester credit hours from institutions that have a majority of degree conferrals at or above the baccalaureate level, and a minimum of 45 semester credit hours in upper division courses. Institutions are not permitted to make programmatic exceptions, except as authorized in paragraph 2(e). Institutions may make a limited number of exceptions from the 60-hour requirement for individual students, up to a maximum of 6 hours.