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ABSTRACT

This paper, which was presented at the Meeting of the Inter-American Bank Countries at Harvard Graduate School of Education in September 2000, discusses the United States Community College System. There are three types of education at American community colleges: university parallel programs, career education, and continuing education. The university parallel programs are sometimes referred to as the two-plus-two concept, meaning a student will complete two years of study at the community college before transferring to a university. The strongest argument for offering the two-plus-two program at the local community college is accessibility, economics, and teaching and learning support. Career education is, by design, not developed nor structured to be transferable. Therefore, unlike the college transfer track, career programs will vary in length from several months to a maximum of two years in most U.S. community colleges. Finally, continuing education at community colleges offer mostly noncredit courses. This unit of instruction was not designed for transfer and plays an important role in the economic development of the local community by assisting in the upgrading of employment skills. This document also discusses articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions in America and other countries and provides recommendations for improving the transfer process.
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College Transfer—Community College to University
United States Community College System

Paul L. McQuay

Presented at the Meeting of the Inter-American Bank Countries
(Cambridge MA
September 4-8, 2000).

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**A Paper Presented at the Meeting of the
Inter-American Bank Countries
at Harvard Graduate School of Education
September 4-8, 2000**

COLLEGE TRANSFER – COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO UNIVERSITY

United States Community College System

The United States Community College System is a term in conflict with itself – there is no system in the United States. Yet, there are community colleges in all of the 50 states. Sometimes the individual community colleges are governed by the State, in a highly centralized form of governance, whereas in other states, each community college has a high degree of autonomy. There are many similarities and differences between and among the over 1,200 community colleges in the U.S., there are three common objectives; that is, university parallel programs, career education and continuing education. The objectives will vary a little state to state, but these three still remain the educational backbone of the U.S. Community College System.

University Parallel

The university parallel programs are sometimes referred to as the two-plus-two concept. This means a student will complete two years of study at the community college before transferring to a university. In the U.S., two years of study generally refers to 60-68 credits (where one credit of study is awarded for each hour/week in the classroom for 15-16 weeks). The number of credit hours will vary, depending upon the specific program discipline.

The disciplines of study within the university parallel category generally can be captured in the following areas:

- o Behavioral Science
- o Business Administration
- o Communication Arts
- o Computer Science/Management Information
- o Education
- o Engineering
- o Liberal Arts
- o Natural Science
- o Science for Health Professions

(<http://www.dccc.edu>)

In the United States the educational concentration is called the program of study. Thus, a student would enroll and engage in either a program of engineering, liberal arts, etc. Each program is made up of individual courses. A typical program consists of 18-22 individual courses. The strongest argument for offering the two-plus-two program at the local community college is:

- o accessibility
- o economics
- o teaching and learning support

The strength of the U.S. community colleges rests on the above-mentioned three strengths: accessibility, economics and teaching/learning support.

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Accessibility

In order to reach the students, the community colleges have developed (curriculum) schedules, places of offering and sequence of courses that are student-centered. It is not unusual for most community colleges to offer evening, weekend and modified schedules to serve the student's needs. As an example, Dundalk Community College in the State of Maryland has established at least part of their programming/scheduling on a swing shift. This offering meets the needs of local industry. Additionally, in any town or county it is not unusual for community colleges to have several locations where classes are offered. In some cases where there is a large enough critical mass, classes (course offerings) will be conducted at the place of business.

Economics

Community colleges attempt to keep the cost of education at a rate that is within reach of most citizens. Low-cost tuition is usually a function of a three-way partnership between the local and state government and the student. This three-way sharing of costs usually results in one of the lowest tuitions among higher education. The fact that the tuition is low and the student resides in the local community equals a low costing education.

Teaching and Learning Support

One of the key ingredients of a community college is the teaching and learning support. This support manifests itself in several major systems, including admissions, curriculum, faculty and support services.

At most community colleges, students are tested into the college not out of What does this mean, "students are tested in?". Each new student is given an entrance examination to determine his or her placement in courses of the selected program of study. As a result, students can be given credit (exemption from certain courses), or can drop back a level if they are deemed unprepared for immediate entry in other courses. This is an important process to ensure success. The curriculum has been designed for advanced achievers and those students needing additional time and preparation.

The faculty are part of the curriculum development process and are hired as teaching faculty. As such they do not have a responsibility for research and/or publishing. However, some do publish and conduct a limited amount of applied research. The key function of community college faculty is to ensure each student's educational success.

Eventually this entire model of teaching and learning is pulled together by the cement of student support services. At most community colleges a wide variety of services are available to assist in the teaching and learning process, including:

- o academic
- o psychological
- o testing
- o tutorial
- o and so forth

The goal of this entire process is to assist a student who, for one reason or another, chooses not to attend the university for the first two years of his or her education, still receives the same first two years of education one would get at the university.

Process of Transfer

Set against the backdrop of the role and function of the university parallel program at the community college, must be mentioned that transferability is determined by the receiving institution – the university. The

process of transferring varies and differs from state to state and community college to community college.

Examples of successful university transfer abound. As an example, at University of California, Irvine Office of Admissions and Relations with Schools (http://www.reg.uci.edu/uci/admissions/cc_prep_sel.html), indicates the following admissions statement regarding the transfer process:

"UCI has a strong commitment to transfer students and, in following California's Master Plan for Higher Education, gives high priority to junior-level (about 60-65 credits) students transferring from California community colleges. UCI defines California community college transfer applicants as students who have completed the last 30 semester/45 quarter units at the California community college."

Most universities, some states, and at least one Canadian province have processes and procedures governing the transfer of students. In the Province of Ontario, Canada, a process has been articulated in a document called, "Ontario College to College Transfer Guide" (<http://ctos.ocas.on.ca/english.htm>). Within the, "Guide," a very general statement toward transfer reads in part:

Introduction

"The Ontario College to College Transfer Guide has been prepared to help students identify and explore transfer possibilities within Ontario community college system. Most transfers among Ontario's colleges is handled on an informal student by student basis."

This inference of student by student seems to imply that the Canadian system of transfer is much less developed, when compared to the community college transfer system in the United States. However, evidence has been uncovered that suggests that while at the Province level transfer might be best negotiated on a student by student basis, at least one college, Humber (Toronto), has developed its own University Transfer Guide. The "Guide" lists (by program area):

- o formal articulation (transfer agreements with universities), and
- o general university transfer credit policies.

This approach to transfer by Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology closely mirrors the U.S. process. Another excellent model of transfer is the one at the University of Arizona, at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policies/984/t-guide.htm>. In general the essence of the transfer process is captured in the following statement:

"The community college *Transfer Guide* presents the lower-division requirements of bachelor's degree programs at the University of Arizona in terms of transferable courses available at Arizona community colleges, numbered in the community college notation. The *Transfer Guide* should be used in conjunction with the electronic catalog and the *Arizona Higher Education Course Equivalency Guide*. The *Transfer Guide* can be found on line at <http://transfer.guides.arizona.edu/>.

The process of transfer – from community college to university – involves many factors. The major factors are outlined above. However, it would be remiss not to say that transfer is a process that is institution to institution, program to program, and can be best achieved in a faculty to faculty curriculum mapping process that aligns the program of the community college with a "like" program at the university. The next program area of the community college to be discussed is the Career Education programs. The Career Education programs, at the local community college are not as such usually developed on the two-plus-two model discussed above, but on an industry/business demand driven outcomes basis. That said, many career

grams do transfer to the university and are subject to the same review and criteria cited for the university

parallel programs. However, the terminal objective of the career programs is employment and not transfer. That said, let's explore the career programs and transfer.

Career Education Programs

As mentioned above, career programs by design are not developed, nor structured to be transfer – two-plus-two. Therefore, unlike the college transfer track, career programs will vary in length – from several months to a maximum of two years in most U.S. community colleges.

The goal of the career education program is to meet a specific employment niche. As an example, two-year programs in nursing, which is a very popular program designed to meet the standards of the State Board of Nursing accrediting commission (NLNAC) and at the same time working hand and glove with the National League of Nursing Examiners. The former organization, State Board, "establishes rules and regulations for the licensure and practice of professional and practical nursing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and provides for this examination of all applicants." (<http://www.dos.pa.us/bpoa/nurbd/mainpage.htm>). The role of the National League of Nursing is for the accreditation of nursing education schools and programs. More information can be found at <http://www.nln.org/nlnac/index.html>.

Thus, the driving factor of the nursing industry is the customers (the health care industry) it serves, with the external organizations ensuring quality. Thus, with rare exception, all U.S. community colleges are limited to two full years of instruction for the student. The nursing programs are limited to two years. One might argue that this may be a limiting factor in some career areas. The fact still remains that two years of instruction is the maximum limit. The Ontario model seems more fully prepared (with three-year diploma program) to deal with the new high-technology programs in media, information technology, health and others. However, the nursing education programs are the exception to the rule, in that career education does not transfer to the university. In response to the growing responsibilities of the professional nurse and other less than baccalaureate degree holders, universities have established what is referred to as the University College. The University College "is the entry point for adults, 22 years or older, who wish to pursue their education as a part-time or full-time day student at Widener." (<http://www.widener.edu.ucstudy.html>).

At the typical U.S. community college, numerous (n=40 – 70) career programs will be offered. The offering will reflect the needs of the local community the college serves. As an example, at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, which is located in the farming belt of the United States, numerous programs have been developed to address the needs of agriculture (<http://www.kirkwood.cc.ia.us>). Whereas, at Delaware County Community College in Media, Pennsylvania (a suburb of Philadelphia), there are no agricultural offerings, but numerous programs to respond to the needs of local business and industry such as insurance, health care, shipyard welding, and others.

Continuing Education

The continuing education offering at community colleges is called many different titles, including: business and industry training, workforce development, corporate training and so forth. This major unit at most community colleges is by design a rapid response division that provides short-term training for business and industry. Most, if not all, of the course offerings of continuing education are noncredit. This unit of instruction plays an important role in the economic development of the local community; that is, assisting in the upgrading of employment skills. This unit of instruction was not designed for transfer, and with rare exception ever is involved in the transfer process.

Toward a Global System of Transfer

Canada and the United States are no strangers to the transfer of students to the university system. Each year

more and more students are attending community colleges for their first two years of education, then transferring to the university for upper-division studies. As a matter of fact, over fifty percent of all students studying in the U.S. Higher Education system are enrolled in one of over 1,200 community colleges. The process of transfer is often referred to as articulation.

This process of articulation varies between and among colleges and universities and also varies according to the program of study. Some community colleges are beginning to recognize the value of developing guaranteed admission processes with selected universities. Guaranteed admission involves having a written agreement with selected universities that ensures students entering the community college have direct access to the university if specific academic standards are met. This guaranteed admission process is very attractive to local as well as international students.

Another creative idea that exemplifies the growing relationship between the community college and universities is the establishment of the upper-division courses/programs at community colleges. In other words, why change location after graduation from the community college. Thus, in certain circumstances a cohort group of students may enter the community college and after four or five years of study, graduate with both an associate degree and a baccalaureate without leaving the local community.

Attempting to test the phantom of transferring students in the international domain, the Community Colleges for International Development, Inc. (U.S.) and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia, engaged in a tri-country transfer process described below.

Australia, Canada and the United States (ACU) Develop Process to Facilitate Transfer

Prior to April 1998, the literature did not reveal any tri-country attempts to link career programs. The project was undertaken to:

- o facilitate transfer to colleges/universities outside the student's normal country of domicile,
- o develop a process whereas other colleges/universities could replicate,
- o establish CCID in a prominent position to facilitate college/program articulation on an international basis.

The programs and colleges selected to engage in the research are listed below:

ACU – PROGRAMS OF ARTICULATION BY COLLEGE		
Program	College	Location
Electronics	Brevard Community College	Cocoa, Florida
Hotel & Restaurant	Delaware County Community College	Media, Pennsylvania
Media	Humber College	Etobicoke, Ontario
Avionics	State Center Community College District	Fresno, California
Secretarial	University of Hawaii Community Colleges	Honolulu, Hawaii

There are more numerous findings, recommendations and implications as a result of this research. A more

complete report, Program by Program can be obtained from the Director of the Project, Dr. Paul L. McQuay (plmcquay@hotmail.com). However, a general summary of the project suggests:

"As the planning and deliberations for the curriculum alignment process between these countries was conceived, it was determined that five diverse academic programs would be studied. The programs selected were diverse in terms of curriculum, geographic location, generally established standards of faculty qualifications, characteristics of advisory committee membership and other viables that characterize strong career programs.

Initially, the planners suspected there were more similarities in the specific curriculum designs than differences. The actual alignment and comparison of curriculum by faculty specialist confirmed this earlier belief. However, this is not to say that all programs aligned or could be aligned and thus eventually articulated. There were some major differences in programs that as of this writing prevented alignment and articulation.

The most glaring example of not aligning was the Aviation program (called a course in Australia). In the United States and Australia, Aviation programs (courses) including faculty, curriculum hours/structure, etc. are regulated by the respective country's aviation industry. This approach to curriculum in each country is quite different and very inflexible in allowing for any deviation of requirements. Therefore, a lesson was learned; that is, programs developed under the auspices of a regulatory agency may not align and articulate. One might suspect this could be the case with programs dealing with regulation and licensure, such as the registered nurse and dental hygienists. However, the four remaining programs, electronics, hotel and restaurant, media and office administration were likely candidates for the alignment process."

Exemplary Model of Tri-country Partnership

The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation – Human Resource Development in Industrial Technology called the Engineering Technology program for Malaysian students one of the best Industrial Technology programs in the world. The model as described in the publication, "Exemplary Training Models in Industrial Technology – The Changing Face of Training in Technology," highlights a three-country partnership between Majlis Amanah Rakyat-MARA (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia), Humber College (Toronto, Canada), and Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg (Pennsylvania, USA). The article goes on to detail how three countries working together can develop not only a quality program, but one that when judged on world standards is deemed to be exemplary among peers.

The model as espoused by Mr. Frank Franklin of Humber involves:

"In each case, the programs are delivered by the four Ontario Colleges are the same as the standard two-year, four semester engineering technician training programs offered by the colleges. In approximately 45% of the program courses, the Malaysian students are in classes with Canadian students. Following the two-year technician program, more than 90% of the students elected to complete the optional third year, which leads to technologist qualifications. Following this, approximately 60% of the students continue on and take an additional year of studies at Penn State, graduating with a Bachelor of Engineering Technology Degree (Hatton, 1995) that this program was offered in a continuous format. This allowed the students to complete six semesters (which usually is accomplished in three years) in a twenty-four month period. This was followed by one full year at Penn State Harrisburg in

order to complete the requirements for a Bachelor of Engineering Technology. Thus, students returned home in three years with a three-year Engineering Technologist diploma and a four-year Bachelor of Engineering Technology degree."

Three country cooperation, three years to complete what is usually done in four, and instruction in two different countries, while being viewed as exemplary!

Summary and Recommendations

1. Transfer from one institution to another is a process. As such, it is institution-to-institution, program-to-program, and faculty-to-faculty.
2. When programs are regulated by licensure or an external agency, complexity is added to the transfer process.
3. The transfer process, which is normally established for the university parallel programs, has applications for students studying in career programs.
4. Some states (in the United States) have mandated a transfer process for community colleges.
5. A written agreement between the community college and the university usually serves as the guide to transfer. This agreement is developed on a program-by-program basis, institution-to-institution.

About the Author

Dr. Paul L. McQuay has over 35 years of experience in the United States' educational system. His understanding of the transfer process is a result of having been a team member on over 25 Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges accreditations (one of the regional accreditation associations in the United States), and having undertaken similar transfer processes internationally. He is a Senior Principal in the organization, Community Colleges for International Development, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Dr. McQuay is considered a leading expert in the multi-national college transfer process.

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