Transfer of Courses
One of the keys to a successful degree partnership is the ability to award credit at one institution for courses taken at another so that the courses can be counted as credit toward the student’s degree. Therefore, in the American models the development and recording of transfer arrangements that guarantee equivalence of courses taught at different institutions is considered critical. Fortunately, BC has a well-developed Transfer System and a very extensive set of transferable courses that are listed in the BC Transfer Guide maintained by BCCAT at www.bctransferguide.ca. Institutions exploring degree partnerships can use the BC Transfer Guide to maintain that transferability of first and second year courses has already been arranged by faculty at those institutions and to identify and address any gaps. Additional arrangements, such as block transfer and upper-level course articulation, may be required to supplement course-to-course transfers.

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)
Regardless of the level of complexity of a degree partnership model, it is likely that this type of information will need to be exchanged quickly and frequently among institutions. In the US examples described in this paper, some form of EDI that can move data reliably and efficiently was considered a must for successful partnerships, particularly given institutions’ different student information systems. Solutions for EDI exchanges for institutional student data needs to be considered and reviewed. EDI can be considered as a data exchange method that is sufficient for use in a degree partnership. Regardless of the models of transfer between institutions, regular communications among faculty and staff at both institutions is needed. BC institutions considering a degree partnership model should agree formally at the beginning about what the partnership entails and about who will be responsible for what. Such an agreement should have the support of the highest levels in each institution. As the partnership evolves, ongoing communication should occur in both formal and informal ways, through those responsible for various aspects of the partnership. Thorough use of this ongoing communication can help foster the spirit required to resolve issues and keep the partnership moving forward so that students are better served.

BC institutions considering a degree partnership model should agree formally at the beginning about which partners are responsible for what and who will be responsible for what. Such an agreement should have the support of the highest levels in each institution.

Conclusion
We hope that the information presented in this paper will be of use to institutions contemplating or already working on some form of degree partnership model, regardless of its complexity, to provide guarantees to students that degree completion for qualified students as a follow-up, BCCAT will be hosting a one-day symposium in January 2007 on degree partnership models in BC. The symposium will provide an opportunity for institutions to share experiences about both best practices and pitfalls in developing and implementing these models. More information on the symposium will be provided by BCCAT in the near future.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Devon Gaber, BCCAT Associate Director, at dgaber@bccat.bc.ca or (604) 412-7990.

References

Degree partnerships are particularly germane to the context of BC post-secondary education because of the extensive transfer system in BC that allows students to begin a program of study at one institution and complete it at another. Degree partnership models are also relevant in terms of the high level of student mobility already occurring among BC public institutions, as indicated in recent student mobility research. It is for these reasons that the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT), and more specifically its Admissions Committee, have taken an interest in the potential benefits of such partnerships. Such benefits are listed below. Degree partnerships can:

• Help students by giving them more guaranteed and varied options for starting and completing a bachelor’s degree.
• Be used by colleges as a means of recruiting and serving students to begin their guaranteed degree path at a college, assuming that adequate marks are maintained.
• Address concerns held by many college officials that enrolment in their university transfer programs was being curtailed because of a perception among students of a lack of space at universities for degree completion.
• Be used by universities and university colleges to ensure a predictable supply of qualified transfer students.

The development of a degree partnership model has been undertaken by various institutions in the US over the last several years. Although there are some differences between the US and BC contexts, there are also many similarities which make the US experience instructive for BC post-secondary institutions. The following section provides a brief overview of three models being employed in two different states.

Oregon State University’s Degree Partnership Program
Oregon State University (OSU), a leader in this arena, began developing degree partnerships with Linn-Benton Community College in 1998, with both institutions being located in and around Corvallis, Oregon. OSU has utilized degree partnership agreements with 12 other community colleges in Oregon and will sign soon 2 agreements with community colleges in Hawaii. The OSU/Linn-Benton Degree Partnership Program (DPD) is a good example of a high degree of collaboration between two institutions in the provision of both courses and student services and is thus much more complex to administer than simpler models. Because the two institutions are geographically close, 85% of Linn-Benton transfer students were already transferring to OSU and many students were “staying,” that is taking courses from both institutions simultaneously or moving back and forth between institutions. The DPP model was designed to remove inter-institutional barriers and to facilitate the
The DPP model was designed to remove inter-institutional barriers and to facilitate the dual enrollment that was already occurring on campuses that had not developed within the partnership were in disciplines which already had significant levels of dual enrollment.

In the OSU-Linn-Benton partnership, students who meet OSU’s admission criteria are admitted to both institutions and have access to a full suite of OSU services for a fee. The DPP model involves significant ongoing interaction between administrative staff at both institutions as well as ongoing communication among faculty regarding course delivery and credit transfer.

OSU-Linn-Benton representatives have given the following advice as to the requirements for a successful degree partnership model:

- Establish at the outset a Memorandum of Understanding that is explicit about all aspects of the partnership.
- Begin with a manageable pilot project, preferably in a “high-risk” program area.
- Use only a single application process that is web-based.
- Make use of electronic data interchange (EDI) technology to share student records, and financial aid information quickly and efficiently.
- Do not create add-on processes for a partnership program but integrate into current systems whenever possible.
- Develop and record transfer and articulation agreements.
- Maintain regular communications among staff and faculty at both institutions.

Further information on the OSU degree partnership model can be found at www.orstate.edu/partnerships.

Portland Area Higher Education Consortium Co-Admission Model

The Portland Area Higher Education Consortium was formed in spring 2006 and involves community colleges in the Portland metropolitan area. The Consortium was formed on the basis of existing bilateral dual enrollment agreements that were in existence between PSU and the four colleges, which had been signed between 1997 and 2003. About 60 percent of PSU’s new students transfer with 30 or more credit hours, colleges, which had been signed between 1997 and 2003. About 60 percent of those must be taken at the university. The latter form of partnership is most relevant to this paper and is described below.

The list of (such) degree partnerships in BC is not meant to be exhaustive but rather illustrative of the important work currently occurring in BC.

The process being developed by TRU and CNC for Dual Admission provides a guarantee to CNC students who meet established requirements that they will have access to degree completion in TRU Bachelor of Arts, Science, or Business Administration programs in first year. New students entering students complete a Dual Admission application form. They must ensure that their CNC courses are transferable to TRU and applicable to the major or degree they wish to undertake. Dual Admission students can be admitted to TRU by TRU/CNC Dual Admission students and will be given a TRU ID number. Once Dual Admission students complete at least 30 transferable credits at CNC with a minimum 2.0 GPA, they will then receive registration priority at TRU based on credits completed. They will be treated during the application process as current TRU students and not classified as transfer students. While Dual Admission students are studying at CNC, TRU and CNC will cooperate in advising students about degree requirements.

University College of the Fraser Valley/ Douglas College Partnership Degrees

Douglas College and the University College of the Fraser Valley (UCFV) have developed a new program based on the Fraser Valley region access to degree completion opportunities at UCFV without having to attend many or, in the case of Psychology, any classes at the UCFV campus. Admission to both partnership degrees is competitive based on GPA, however, once students are admitted, they are guaranteed access to the courses they need for degree completion, either through priority registration in Year 3 or Year 4. All degree requirements taken at Douglas are accepted for transfer at UCFV.

In the Psychology degree, students may apply for admission to the partnership degree after completing 30 credits of Psychology courses, including at least three of the psychology courses that transfer to UCFV at the 3rd or 4th year level. Students then take Year 4 UCFV courses as a cohort at Douglas faculty. The Criminal Justice degree is similar except that students must complete 60 specified, transferable credits at Douglas and/or another institution in order to receive credit, which often lead to a Criminology diploma, and meet a minimum GPA requirement. Entry to these programs begins in the spring of Year 3 in which students take 30 credits of Douglas College courses taught by Douglas faculty. Year 4 students then take UCFV courses taught by UCFV faculty.

University of Victoria/Camosun College Nursing Degree Program

The University of Victoria (UVic) and Camosun College in Victoria offers a six-month Bridge program to its own Technology diploma graduates or other programs in other institutions and technical institutes. Admission to the Bridge program is competitive based on GPA in the diploma program, and students who maintain their GPA will be admitted direct into the program for the UVic and UBC degrees. Successful students leave Camosun with an Advanced Diploma. Bridge programs are offered by Camosun for entry to UVic’s Bachelor of Science in Nursing and for entry to UBC in Civil or Mining Engineering.

Camosun College Engineering Bridge Program

Camosun College offers an Engineering Bridge program to students wanting to continue with a Bachelor of Engineering or Bachelor of Software Engineering at UVic or a Bachelor of Applied Science in Engineering at the University of British Columbia (UBC) (www.ubc.ca/academic/degrees/eng/). Camosun College offers this six-month Bridge program to its own Technology diploma graduates or other programs in other institutions and technical institutes. Admission to the Bridge program is competitive based on GPA in the diploma program, and students who maintain their GPA will be admitted direct into the program for the UVic and UBC degrees. Successful students leave Camosun with an Advanced Diploma. Bridge programs are offered by Camosun for entry to UVic’s Bachelor of Science in Engineering and for entry to UBC in Civil or Mining Engineering.

Malapais University-College/North Island College Priority Registration Agreement

University-College and North Island College (NIC) finalized in late 2005 a Priority Registration Agreement which, although not a full degree partnership, does provide some form of guarantee for students. Malapais offers priority registration to NIC students if they transfer directly to second or third year at Malapais in University Arts and Science or Business Administration. NIC students must successfully complete at least 15 credits of transferable coursework at NIC by January 1st if they want to transfer to Malapais in that calendar year. NIC students meet these requirements and are guaranteed continuing at Malapais rather than transfer students and are guaranteed a place when there are limited open spots at Malapais, thus greatly increasing their chances of successfully enrolling at the university (nic.bc.ca/programs/agreements/htm).

Important Considerations for Degree Partnerships in the BC Context

Based on both the US and BC partnerships described in this paper, a number of considerations are important for degree partnerships for BC institutions contemplating the development of a degree partnership model. If institutions take these considerations into account, degree partnerships in the BC context will hopefully operate more smoothly from the outset. Institutions may also engage in less complex partnership models, providing some form of alternative model that addresses all of these considerations.