

March 20, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Continued Discussion and Input on Goals and Membership of Proposed Regent Transfer Council

Issue

The Regents have prioritized transfer and articulation as one of the areas where improvement could directly impact student completion. The Regents now need to identify the most effective ways of improving transfer for students within the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE).

Background

At their most recent meeting on March 4, 2019, the Academic and Student Affairs Committee (ASAC) of the State Board of Regents discussed various activities that could lead to improved student transfer. There was support for forming a Regents' Transfer Council (RTC), which would be responsible for: (1) oversight and direction on key activities, and (2) serving as a body that can consider transfer credit appeals of institutions or for students who complete the institutional appeals process but are unhappy with the credit determination.

Discussion of the purpose, authority, membership and priorities of the proposed Regents' Transfer Council will provide direction for formulating an action item for the Regents to consider in a subsequent meeting (ideally, May 2019). Provided for discussion are two documents entitled "Initial Transfer and Articulation Recommendations," and "Discussion: Formulation of the Regents' Transfer Council (RTC)."

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends a thorough discussion to help shape Regent policy drafts regarding transfer and articulation that can be considered at future Regent meetings.

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David L. Buhler  
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/EJH

**Board of Regents Academic and Student Affairs Committee**  
**Initial Transfer and Articulation Recommendations**  
**March 29, 2019**

**Background**

The Regents Timely Completion Working Group completed campus visits that included in-depth conversations with students in 2017. Subsequently, Regents implemented student conversations over lunch at regular Board meetings. One of the key issues raised by students was the transfer of credits when transferring between Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) institutions. Having to repeat credits or complete additional credits leads to increased time to completion of a certificate or degree and increased expense and potential loss of financial aid eligibility for the student (in the form of tuition) and the state (in terms of post-secondary support).

Transfer and articulation of courses and programs across institutions is complex but critical for students. Generally, development of course and program curriculum begins at the “grass roots” level of departmental faculty, responding to local student and community interests. There are, however, some parameters that must be set for curriculum development and for course and program articulation that can contribute significantly to more seamless transfer and timely completion of certificates and degrees for students who transfer between institutions.

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee recommends the State Board of Regents affirms the following recommendations. Specific strategies are listed below each outcome. These recommendations represent the highest priorities for the most “payoff” in reaching better completion rates through better transfer.

- 1. Establish a Regents’ Transfer Council with the authority of the Board to establish guidelines and processes for improved articulation and transfer across institutions (See Utah Code 53B-1-103(3)(b),(h)(iii)), including the following:**
  - a) Require alignment between transfer pre-majors and major courses for the five largest transfer majors by Fall 2020 and for the next five largest by Fall 2021.**
    - Beginning with the majors that serve the largest numbers of students in general and transfer students in particular (Business, Psychology, Biology, Nursing, Elementary Education), establish a consistent set of courses system-wide for pre-majors.
    - Work with USHE institutions to reach full compliance for the identified majors by 2021.
    - Publish system-wide transfer pre-majors in a prominent place for easy student access (Transfer Guide and/or Utah Futures).

**b) Implement a fully functional, student-facing USHE transfer guide in which all USHE institutions must participate by Fall 2021.**

- Obtain costs and potential vendors through the RFP process (underway).
- Identify funds to cover costs.
- Implement and assess progress/compliance/student satisfaction with the product in Fall 2021.

**c) Eliminate “hidden prerequisites” in program majors by Fall 2020.**

- Require that published information regarding program majors describe all college-level courses required to complete the major and fully disclose the total number of credits required to complete the major.
- Assess institutional compliance with the requirement in Fall 2020.

**d) By Fall 2020, require each USHE institution to provide to students information about: (1) how a transfer credit determination is made, and (2) how to appeal a disputed transfer credit determination.**

**2. Implement the State Student Identifier (SSID) to comply with law and improve data by Fall 2020.**

- Direct the Commissioner to convene a working group of institutional representatives to implement the SSID at all USHE institutions.

3/18/19

### **Discussion: Formulation of the Regents' Transfer Council (RTC)**

#### **What:**

The Regents' Transfer Council is a standing committee under the State Board of Regents that works to improve and advance post-secondary transfer for Utah students.

**Purpose:** The RTC focuses primarily on data-based identification of transfer bottlenecks and formulation of transfer policy and support for best, including such things as the alignment of courses and programs of study, identification of transfer pathways, and clear communication to students who are contemplating transfer or transferring. Regularly identify transfer data desired. Receive an annual report of transfer data and, based on the data, identify priorities/policy directions for smoothing transfer for the next year. Receive follow-up report on priorities regularly. Serve as the final level for transfer appeals from students or institutions.

#### **Why:**

When transfer of credit between Utah post-secondary institutions is facilitated and improved, students benefit because they:

- Take the most direct route to their post-secondary educational goal, without taking unnecessary credits or time.
- Spend less for tuition, fees and books.
- Incur less debt.
- Maximize their use of federal student grants and loans.
- More quickly enter the workforce at higher levels of pay than they would if they did not have a post-secondary credential.

Ultimately, the state spends less to support student completion of post-secondary education because the number of credits to certificate or degree is optimized.

#### **Authority:**

For transfer and articulation issues already addressed in policy, the RTC has final authority to act on behalf of the Board in accordance with that policy. New policy recommendations and changes to existing policy shall be forwarded from the RTC to the full Board for approval.

#### **Who:**

The RTC is coordinated by the division of Academic and Student Affairs and is composed of the following members:

#### **Members, appointed by Regent Chair:**

- Regents' Academic and Student Affairs Committee Chair, who serves as the Chair of the RTC
- Regent from the Finance and Facilities Committee appointed by the SBR Chair
- SBR Student Regent
- Representatives from the eight USHE institutions, recommended by institutional presidents (across these functionalities: Presidents, Chief Academic Officers, Chief Student Affairs Officers, or others at the Cabinet level) – appointed by Regent Chair
  - One of the two presidents of USHE two-year institutions
  - One four-year president (or designated CAO) of the four regional universities

- Chair, Utah Council of Faculty Senate Leaders
- Chair, General Education Task Force

**Resource Members:**

- Two representatives from the Transfer and Articulation Committee (one Registrar and one Transfer Advisor), selected by the Committee
- One representative from the administrative staff of the Utah State Board of Education, appointed by the State Superintendent
- One representative of the Utah System of Technical Colleges (UTech), appointed by the Commissioner of the USTC
- One representative from each of the private, not-for-profit institutions in Utah who elect to participate (BYU, Westminster, LDS Business College, Western Governors' University)

**Immediate Priorities:**

- *Hidden Prerequisites:* No later than Fall 2019, recommend policy to the Board to eliminate hidden prerequisites. Assess compliance initially in Fall 2020, with additional follow-up in Fall 2021.
- *SSID:* By December 2019, recommend policy to the Board to implement the State Student Identifier (SSID) to comply with law and improve data. Recommend to the Board the Commissioner be charged with establishing an SSID Implementation Team, with representatives from all institutions. Assess progress on implementation in Fall 2020.
- *Pre-major Alignment:* By Fall 2020, receive a report on alignment between transfer pre-majors and majors for the five largest transfer majors; provide guidance on next steps. Continue with next five largest transfer majors.
- *Pathways:* Receive an annual report on the work of the Pathways Working Group. Set priorities for the working group.
- *Transfer Guide:* Receive initial report on USHE Transfer Guide RFP; identify funding source; receive annual reports on the USHE Transfer Guide implementation and guide priorities.
- *Transfer Appeals:* Make a policy recommendation to: (1) require institutions to institute a transfer credit appeals process and make the process known to students, and (2) delineate a transfer appeals process at the Regent level for appeals that been denied after full consideration at the institution level (for students who choose to continue to appeal). Consider recommending an initial screening of transfer credit appeals by the USHE Ombudsperson, a regular report on the transfer credit appeals resolved by the Ombudsperson, and RTC consideration of transfer credit appeals not resolved by the Ombudsperson.