



## **Committee on the Transferability of Core College Courses Final Recommendations - June 2013**

### **Background**

In 2012 the Michigan legislature included boilerplate language in the community college appropriations bill that focused on improving the transferability of core college courses by revising the current Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars & Admissions Officers (MACRAO) agreement. The language (see below) creates a committee that includes 5 community colleges representatives, five individuals from the public universities, and four legislators (two from each chamber). The legislation also requires an interim report in March 2013 and a final report in September 2013.

To guide this work, the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) and the Presidents Council State Universities of Michigan (PCSUM) identified individuals to develop recommendations to be vetted. Community college representatives (from Glen Oaks, Macomb, Mott, North Central, and Schoolcraft) met with their university counterparts (represented by Central Michigan, Eastern Michigan, Michigan State, Oakland, and Western Michigan University) to identify the critical issues and/or barriers and lay out a process for vetting recommendations for improving the transfer of core college courses. Individuals from the leadership of MACRAO have also participated in these discussions.

### **Guiding principles and recommendations for a revised “Michigan Transfer Agreement” (MTA)**

#### *Guiding Principles:*

- Make the agreement simple and easy to understand
- Keep the agreement student-focused
- Treat transfer students the same as native students at the receiving institution
- Acknowledge the distinction between the MTA and degree requirements
- Promote transparency among institutions to ensure accurate transfer information for students
- Require students to complete at least one credit-bearing course at the institution awarding the MTA

#### *Recommendations for the newly named Michigan Transfer Agreement:*

To fulfill the Michigan Transfer Agreement, students must successfully complete at least 30 credits, with at least a 2.0 in each course. These credits, which will be certified by a Michigan community college, should be met according to the following distributions:

- 1 course in English Composition
- A second course in English Composition or 1 course in Communications
- 1 course in Mathematics (see “Next Steps” section for more information)
- 2 courses in Social Sciences (from two disciplines)
- 2 courses in Humanities and Fine Arts (from two disciplines excluding studio and performance classes)
- 2 courses in Natural Sciences including one with laboratory experience (from two disciplines)

### **Rationale for these recommendations**

*Providing institutional flexibility and eliminating existing provisos* – There is consensus that receiving schools have too many provisos or exceptions with the current MACRAO agreement. By adding a mathematics course, an additional natural science course, and acknowledging that learning outcomes such as global awareness and diversity are embedded in existing courses these recommendations seek to eliminate the issues that led to the provisos in the existing agreement. The goal of this revised agreement is to establish requirements that would fulfill many of the general education requirements at Michigan public universities. Similar to the autonomy provided by the Higher Learning Commission, our accrediting body, the agreement does not attempt to dictate specific courses as this is the purview of individual colleges and universities—specifically the faculty.

*Recognizing multiple student paths* – The recommendations recognize that students enroll in higher education institutions with different education goals and needs. For example, students intending to pursue programs in the social sciences or liberal arts may not require more rigorous courses in mathematics. The recommendation of one mathematics course, while acknowledging the need for numeracy, is intended to avoid creating a barrier for students to satisfy the requirements of the transfer agreement.

*Treating the 30 credits in the agreement as a block* – The recommendations under this revised agreement treat the requirements as a block of core college courses as long as students earn at least a 2.0 in each course. For the block transfer to work seamlessly for students, it is incumbent for institutions to keep course equivalencies that satisfy the MTA up-to-date and readily available on college, university, and Michigan Transfer Network websites.

#### *The role of the 30 Credits of Core College Courses as part of a Student's Bachelor Degree Requirements*

In describing how the core college courses fit into a student's bachelor degree, one can envision that the 30 credits of core college courses will most likely fulfill all or the majority of the student's lower level general education requirements dependent on their major e.g., engineering vs. fine arts. If the course does not fit into the major requirements then that course and credits will be counted towards the student's overall degree requirements. At some institutions, students are required to also take upper level general education courses for their bachelor's degree. The relationship of core college courses to university general education and degree requirements needs to be clearly articulated through the implementation process and in communications with students about the MTA.

*Promoting credential attainment* – There was a discussion among the group about the need to promote credential attainment. The concept of a general education certificate may contribute to this goal, but the committee also acknowledged the more important aspect of improving the transfer between community colleges and universities is to help students move more quickly to bachelor's degrees.

### **Next Steps and Implementation**

These recommendations have been shaped by considerable institutional input and feedback from colleges and university staff over the past eight months. The legislature required the submission of an interim report to the legislature by March 1, 2013 and representatives from this committee provided legislative testimony at the end of February to satisfy this requirement. The committee is now ready to present these final recommendations for institutions to adopt with the understanding that implementation of this new agreement is beyond the scope of the legislatively-mandated group.

The charge of the Committee on the Transferability of Core College Courses has been to develop the broad outlines of a new agreement (see the legislative language below) and the committee recommends that implementation of the revised Michigan Transfer Agreement be led by MACRAO. The committee believes that

institutions should commit to providing clear and readily available information regarding the process for satisfying the Michigan Transfer Agreement at their institutions.

To facilitate this transparency, MACRAO will develop a detailed “Michigan Transfer Agreement Articulation Handbook” (similar to the handbook for the existing agreement) that will describe the details and best practices for implementation of this new agreement. Furthermore, MACRAO will guide the development of a communication plan to inform students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders of the new agreement. Working with all the appropriate constituents including institutional leadership and faculty, MACRAO will also determine a process for regularly reviewing the Michigan Transfer Agreement for needed changes. Finally, the committee highlighted two broad issues that will require additional dialogue between and among institutions as this new agreement is implemented:

- 1) *Residency requirements and issues of student swirl* – As noted previously, the committee acknowledged the increasing prevalence of student swirl between and among two- and four-year institutions. As such, there was significant discussion about the appropriate residency requirement for an institution to award a “stamp” under the new transfer agreement. While the committee recognizes the appropriate need for institutions to have a process for students to establish a transcript at their institution, the committee recommends that this new agreement be distinct from associate degree residency requirements and that no residency requirement be required for the Michigan Transfer Agreement beyond students completing at least one credit-bearing course at the institution awarding the MTA.

It is important to note that given other significant discussions on related issues such as changes to accreditation “assumed practices” and reverse transfer agreements, MCCA will work in conjunction with MACRAO to facilitate a conversation with the Michigan community colleges about these issues with an eye toward more consistency on residency requirements across community colleges.

- 2) *Need for clarity and consistency around the mathematics requirement* – The committee acknowledges that the new mathematics requirement may present a potential barrier for some students to progress and complete an associate’s or a bachelor’s degree credential depending on their programmatic path. As a result of outreach from the leadership of the Michigan Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges, MCCA and PCSUM have facilitated a dialogue with a focus group of mathematics faculty and other staff from two- and four-year institutions to develop some initial ideas on this requirement in order to strive for consensus regarding the courses that will fulfill the MTA and thereby lead to greater clarity and consistency for students. Based on the dialogue that occurred at these two meetings, the mathematics faculty proposed the following draft recommendation for the MTA mathematics requirement:

One course in mathematics should be satisfied by an entry-level college course\* in one of the following:

- College Algebra
- Statistics
- Quantitative Reasoning (a.k.a. Every day or Liberal Arts Mathematics)
- An advanced level course in any of these areas.

\*A mathematics course should be treated as an entry-level college course if students are expected to demonstrate mastery of Algebra I or content of equivalent rigor prior to enrollment.

*Rationale:* Students who follow diverse educational and occupational pathways need multiple points of entry into college-level mathematics. This recommendation recognizes the variety of mathematics requirements of the degree programs these students will transfer into. Students should be advised carefully when choosing a degree program to ensure that they elect the appropriate mathematics course. The group agreed that while there are fundamental levels of knowledge that indicate a student is prepared for college-

level mathematical study, not all students are well-served by being advised into a traditional algebra-intensive course sequence.

The intent moving forward is to facilitate a broader discussion with mathematics faculty from all institutions about how best to finalize the mathematics requirement for the new MTA.

### **Language for the Committee on the Transferability of Core College Courses (Sec. 210a)**

(1) A committee shall be created to develop a process to improve the transferability of core college courses between community colleges and public universities on a statewide basis. Building off of the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers agreement and existing articulation agreements in place between individual institutions, the committee shall work to develop equivalency standards of core college courses and identify equivalent courses offered by the institutions.

(2) The committee shall be composed of the following:

- Five representatives from community colleges selected by MCCA
- Five representatives from public universities selected by PCSUM
- One member of the House of Representatives selected by the Speaker of the House.
- One member of the House of Representatives selected by the Minority Leader of the House.
- One member of the Senate selected by the Senate Majority Leader.
- One member of the Senate selected by the Senate Minority Leader.

(3) The committee shall submit interim project status reports to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Community Colleges and Higher Education, the Senate and House Fiscal Agencies, and the State Budget director by March 1, 2013 and September 1, 2013.

### **Committee members**

#### *Community college representatives:*

Amy Fugate - Vice President, Academic Affairs, Mott Community College

Ana Gaillat - Dean of Teaching and Learning, Glen Oaks Community College

Laurie Kattuah-Snyder - Associate Dean of Advising and Partnerships, Schoolcraft College

Donna Petras - Dean, University Relations, Macomb Community College

Paula Welmers - Counselor - Student Services, North Central Michigan College

#### *University representatives:*

Pat Cygnar - Director of Community Relations, Eastern Michigan University

David Johnson – Manager, Undergraduate Degree Programs, Central Michigan University

Steve Shablin - Registrar, Oakland University

Linda Stanford - Associate Provost for Academic Services, Michigan State University

Christopher Tremblay - Associate Provost for Enrollment Management, Western Michigan University

#### *Other participants:*

Mike Hansen, Michigan Community College Association

Chris Baldwin, Michigan Community College Association

Erin Schor, Michigan Community College Association

Jenny Schanker, Michigan Community College Association

Mike Boulus, Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan

Patty Farrell-Cole, Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan

Karen Hutslar – Registrar, Central Michigan University & MACRAO representative

John Meldrum – Asst. Dean/Registrar, Sacred Heart Major Seminary & MACRAO representative