

Montana University System 2002 Transfer Project

GOAL: To make transfer as efficient and effective as possible for those who have had for credit education experiences comparable to those offered by the receiving institution, resulting in smooth and rapid student progress toward a high quality baccalaureate degree in a program of study that is comprehensive, coherent and academically rigorous.

Project Management Structure

The Montana University System 2002 Transfer Project will be implemented under the auspices of the Board of Regents' Academic and Student Affairs Committee. The overall structure will include three committees with distinct functions.

1. A Higher Education Transfer Steering Committee, appointed by the Commissioner of Higher Education, will guide the project in its various components, assist in identifying sequentially the project's areas of investigation, and provide regular progress reports to the Regents' Academic and Student Affairs Committee. The Higher Education Transfer Steering Committee shall comprise 15 members:

- 2 Faculty, one from a four-year campus and one from a two-year campus
- 1 Registrar
- 2 Montana Associated Students
- 1 Community College or College of Technology administrator
- 3 Chief Academic Officers – UM, MSU, Tribal College
- 2 Academic Deans (rotating according to areas under scrutiny)
- 1 AAS program dean or director
- 1-2 Outside constituents (Fiscal Analyst, Education Liaison)

The Transfer Steering Committee will oversee the MUS 2002 Transfer Project and

- Select, following appropriate consultation and fact-finding, the disciplines to be reviewed and brought into the statewide articulation process after the initial round of reviews.
- Suggest fact-finding strategies and necessary studies to be conducted.
- Form and charge statewide disciplinary articulation teams and provide them documentation.
- Receive, critique/amend and forward to the appropriate bodies recommendations from statewide articulation teams about course and program alignment.
- Review issues and policy questions surrounding transfer and make recommendations to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education about desirable changes in policy and practice including, but not limited to:
 - Method for updating regularly course and major program articulation?
 - Method for publicizing articulations annually?
 - Feedback processes for 4-year programs to inform 2-year institutions about transfer students' progress/preparedness for transfer?
 - Feedback to sending institutions about the disposition of transfer credits.
 - Acceptance of transfer courses with less than a "C" grade.

2. The Campus Academic Advisory Committee will be selected by the campus executive officer and report to the academic officer. Where a campus committee that deals with transfer issues already exists, the administration may choose to invoke that committee for the project functions. Composition of the committee will be at the discretion of the campus administration but should include student representation.

The Campus Academic Advisory Committee will assist the chief academic officer in managing the 2002 Transfer Project requirements at the local level, to include:

- Convene fact-finding meetings on 4-year campuses to collect student input and documentation about difficulties encountered in transfer by field or generally.
- Based on input from students, registrars, and sending institutions, recommend to the Steering Committee which disciplines need work via statewide

disciplinary articulation teams in subsequent years.

- For each discipline selected for MUS scrutiny, compile documentation and testimony about transfer problems on the campus, summarize it and forward a report to the Steering Committee.
- Recommend to the Steering Committee members for statewide disciplinary articulation teams.
- Based on campus input, recommend policy and procedural improvements related to transfer to campus officials and/or the Steering Committee.
- Assist campus officials with follow-up on Disciplinary Committees' recommendations and in communicating policies and procedures to the campus.
- Serve as a sounding board for the campus administration in implementing the 2002 Transfer Project or its outcomes.
- Support campus implementation of Banner student information system functions that facilitate evaluation of transfer credit and program planning.

3. Statewide Disciplinary Articulation Teams will be convened for those fields where statewide study of transfer and articulation is deemed necessary. These teams will focus on the articulation of programs of study, one to another, across the undergraduate institutions in Montana. The purpose of their work is to identify areas of difficulty in transfer and assess the extent to which these difficulties may be resolved or should be allowed to stand.

Statewide Disciplinary Articulation Teams will be selected in consultation with MUS academic officers and other campus officials statewide as appropriate and will be charged by the Commissioner's Office. They will report to the Deputy Commissioner, who will refer their recommendations to the appropriate bodies for further consideration and action. Statewide Disciplinary Articulation Teams will deal with disciplinary matters only, including:

- Identify and document difficulties that students encounter in transferring within the same disciplinary major from one post-secondary institution to another in Montana.
- Assess alleged difficulties for factual bases and causes and recommend resolutions.
- Review like programs of study with the purpose of making a course-by-course alignment for transfer.
- Develop an inter-institutional transfer grid of all major and required courses that do align.
- For major and required courses that do not align, prepare a report that specifies
 - o Which courses do not transfer and why?
 - o Which courses might transfer if modified in specific ways?
- Recommend a process by which the disciplinary faculties at the respective institutions will keep course and program articulations current and published statewide.

Project Segments

The Montana University System 2002 Transfer Project will address transfer across the multiple levels of the undergraduate curriculum and review for accuracy or update the *Statewide Core Curriculum and Community College Transfer Guide* published in 1993-94. This work will be a continuation of the project begun by OCHE in 2000 and will ultimately add articulation of courses in disciplinary majors.

1. The General Education Core is referenced under Regents' policy 301.10 that provides:

... all campuses of the Montana University System will recognize the integrity of general education programs offered by units of the Montana University System and the three publicly supported community colleges in Montana. Undergraduate students who have completed an approved general education program of between 30 and 45 lower division credit hours at one of the institutions noted above and who transfer to another of those institutions will be deemed to have met the lower division general education requirements of the campus to which the students have transferred. Students who have not completed such an approved general education program will have their transcript evaluated for transfer purposes using the [Statewide Core Curriculum and Community College Transfer Guide](#).

Depending upon the major program into which the student transfers, additional lower division requirements may still be necessary for the transfer student to complete as part of the published programmatic prerequisites.

The *Transfer Guide*, outlines the Montana Transferable Core Curriculum. This is based on an agreement among community, tribal, and publicly-funded colleges and universities in the State and assures the transfer of up to 30 semester credits for those students enrolled in prescribed courses within each of eight discipline areas at a participating host institution. The eight discipline areas are:

Natural Science (with labs)	6 semester credits max
Social Science	6 semester credits max
Mathematics	3 semester credits max
English Composition	3 semester credits max
Humanities	3 semester credits max
Fine Arts	3 semester credits max
History	3 semester credits max
Cultural Diversity	3 semester credits max
TOTAL	30

Satisfactory completion of courses listed in the Transferable Core Curriculum permit the student to receive credit equivalent to the lower-division degree requirements of the receiving institution's general education core requirements.

Progress on updating the course lists under this rubric has been good. All campus listings for the 30-hour core for transfer have been revised and are under final review on the campuses of the MUS and community colleges. Ms. Ellen Swaney is soliciting comparable information from Tribal Colleges. All of this information will be updated on the MUS web site and circulated to the various campuses.

The policy sets a procedure for updating: campuses are to update information with OCHE when changes are made. As this procedure has not worked, OCHE will ask the Steering Committee to consider other approaches to maintaining currency of the course lists.

2. Lower Division Course Matching Lists were also featured in the 1993-94 *Transfer Guide* and have not been updated since. This process is underway and requires reviewing and correcting course numbers and titles by each of the campuses. Because no electronic files could be found, the first step in the updating process was to put the course files into electronic format. This proved an immense job, requiring entry of all course-matching lists from 134 pages x 7 columns of 93-94 *Guide*.

These 1993-94 course lists were distributed for updating by the respective campuses, which returned massive numbers of changes, with many hand-written entries. One of the smallest campuses in public education, for example, submitted a list of 390 **new** courses. Here again, those involved will need to consider the best procedure for regular updating.

3. Transfer in the Major will be reviewed on a priority basis. The "trouble spots" that have been identified via complaints and the largest majors in the MUS will be the subject of the first reviews. Based on student complaints received at OCHE, the following appear to need additional work on articulation:

- Nursing - both vertically and laterally
- Music Education into UM from MSU-Bozeman or MSU-Billings

Further, staff suggest that additional majors be selected according to the size of the graduating classes. In other words, schedule for disciplinary review and course articulation those programs with the largest number of graduates in Spring 2001 and ask the Steering Committee to set the slate for review in 2002-03 based on findings from the campus hearings.

For Spring 2002, the following disciplines are recommended based on IPEDs completions data:

- Business (360 + 252 graduates)
- Elementary education (357 graduates)

4. Tech Prep Credit recently emerged as an issue warranting consideration in the transfer arena because there are five Tech Prep districts in the state with different practices. Before the present Transfer Project was conceived, a committee was charged under the leadership of Dean Dennis Lerum of University of Montana-Missoula College of Technology to address Tech Prep. The charge to this group is wide-ranging and includes: How Tech Prep credit is generated in the five

regions; Reciprocity across two-year institutions; Acceptance of Tech Prep credit in four-year institutions; Transcribing of Tech Prep credits; and related policy issues.

Strategies and Procedures

Overall, the MUS 2002 Transfer Project should be conducted consistently and according to a set of pre-established procedures. When the need arises, any committee involved may raise issues for consideration of all others and recommend adoption of new or additional procedures and standards to handle unforeseen circumstances.

Discipline Selection. Initially, staff will select 2-3 disciplines for the first round of disciplinary articulation. Thereafter, selection of disciplines to articulate will be based on input from the campuses and recommendations from the Advisory Committees. Based on their input, the Steering Committee can select the disciplines and set a schedule of articulation reviews for several years.

Fact Finding. Advisory Committees will convene fact-finding meetings on the 4-year campuses to collect student documentation/testimony about difficulties they have encountered in transfer in these fields. Uniformly, students must submit documentation before or at the time of their testimony. Without documentation, the Advisory Committee members will have no way to pursue the issues raised.

Limitations. For the purpose of this project, articulation from two-year to four-year institutions will focus on the 100- and 200-levels of courses. Two-year institutions are not accredited at the upper-division level. As a result, claims for acceptance of lower-division course work from the two-year sector in lieu of required upper-division courses on the four-year campus will be dismissed.

Related Policy Issues. Each of the committees involved in the Transfer Project should be vigilant to the need for additional policies, both institutional and system-wide, to govern and facilitate the transfer process. Suggested areas of exploration or consideration should be conveyed to the campus academic officers and OCHE for further deliberation. Overall, there will be some preference accorded to recommendations for system-wide policies because uniformity of approach and consistent guidelines across the MUS will contribute to easier transfer for students. Areas of consideration might include:
campus review or appeals mechanisms related to transfer; formalizing disciplinary reviews in the MUS; common course numbering or course pre-fixes; time limits on or processes for validating currency and thus acceptability of transfer credit in highly technical or professional areas.

Schedule. The MUS 2002 Transfer Project will be launched in January with these timelines:

- January 2002: Name MUS Steering Committee
Form or formalize campus Advisory Committees
Finalize MUS general education core curriculum updates and publish, adding tribal and independent colleges as they come in
Publicize campus fact -finding or focus group sessions on transfer
- February : Select, form and charge disciplinary committees in 2-3 fields
Begin work on general education E-core for MUS
Convene campus fact -finding or focus group sessions on transfer
Compile documentation from campus fact -finding sessions on transfer
- February 25 : Convene disciplinary committees and set work schedule
Continue updating lower-division course matching lists
Campus Advisory Committees assemble recommendations on disciplines to be articulated in 2002-03 and forward to OCHE
- March : Distribute lower-division course matching lists to campuses for sign-off
OCHE convene Steering Committee to select 2002-03 disciplines and review progress
- April : Publish lower-division course matching lists statewide
Develop Web-based format for transfer core curriculum and lower-division course matching lists updating by campuses
- May : Receive and publish statewide articulation grid for nursing programs

Select membership for 2002-03 disciplinary teams
OCHE receive recommendations about MUS policy needs and standards for project conduct in 2002-03

- June : Receive and publish statewide articulation grid for elementary education
- July: Receive and publish statewide articulation grid for business
- August : Select, form and charge disciplinary committees in 2-3 fields and restart cycle

Policy 301.5 Transfer of credits
Revised March 23, 2001; Issued April 2, 2001

Board policy:

1. All college level courses from regionally accredited institutions of higher education will be received and applied by all campuses of the Montana University System, and by the community colleges, towards the free elective requirements of the Associate and Baccalaureate degrees.

NOTE: College level courses shall be defined as those courses that are applicable toward an associate of arts, associate of science or baccalaureate degree at their respective institution. The receiving institution will determine in advance of a student's enrollment which courses within an associate of applied science degree program will be credited toward a given associates or baccalaureate degree. In all cases, such courses shall not include remedial or developmental courses.

2. In relation to the major, minor, general education, distribution requirements, and free electives of the Associate and Baccalaureate degrees, all campuses of the Montana University System, and the community colleges, are authorized to determine the applicability of credits earned at regionally accredited institutions of higher education.

3. In administering the policy in paragraphs (1) and (2) an institution shall include the credits earned by a student from an institution which is a candidate for regional accreditation after the student has successfully completed 20 semester credits with a 2.0 cumulative grade point average at the receiving institution.

4. Campuses of the Montana University System, and the community colleges, may give credit for education received from non-collegiate institutions on the basis of recommendations published by the American Council on Education.

5. The Chief Academic Officers shall recommend to the Commissioner procedures to resolve transferability problems. In formulating the recommendations, it is understood that Chief Academic Officers are representing their institution's policy as approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

6. Institutions may make exceptions to give credit if the criteria described above are not met. However, the following principles should be followed:

a. The chief academic officer, registrar, and admissions officer should review each case utilizing the following criteria:

(1) There must be evidence that there is academic quality in the institution, both in the faculty and in program offering.

(2) The student must earn at least a minimum 2.0 grade point average or its equivalent at the receiving institution.

b. If an exception is allowed, a report shall be filed with the Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs.

7. Institutions may determine policies relating to the acceptance of college credit from other countries.

History:

The Montana University System Transfer of Credit Policy as promulgated by the Commissioner of Higher Education, February 3, 1976; Item 27-009-R0680, June 23, 1980, as revised April 13, 1981, May 21, 1982, June 20, 1986, March 17, 1989, January 29, 1998, September 17, 1998, November 18, 1999 ([Item 104-103-R0999](#)), and March 23, 2001 ([Item 110-102-R0101](#)).
