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2008 Articulation and Transfer Review

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Department of Academic and Student Affairs

Nevada System of Higher Education

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Introduction

In the *State of the System Address* delivered on November 17, 2005, Chancellor James E. Rogers declared that the process of transferring from one NSHE institution to another will be seamless. The Chancellor's commitment to seamless transfer is further supported by the Board of Regents' *Master Plan* of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) that sets forth the following seven interrelated goals that are intended to provide a roadmap for public higher education in Nevada:

- **Student-Focused System** – The higher education system in Nevada will create a welcoming, respectful, and friendly environment where all students have the opportunity to participate and succeed at every level of higher education.
- **Reputation for Excellence** – Nevada's institutions of higher education will increase their national, regional, and statewide reputation based on targeted, outstanding, innovative programs and other accomplishments.
- **Quality Education** – Nevada's system of higher education will provide consistently excellent learning experiences for its students through instruction, research, and service.
- **A Prosperous Economy** – Through instruction, research, and service, higher education in Nevada will be an essential element in developing and sustaining a strong, dynamic, knowledge-based economy for Nevada.
- **P-16 Education** – Higher education will increase partnerships with the K-12 system to ensure the cooperative delivery of education from pre-kindergarten through college degrees.
- **Building Quality of Life** – Higher education in Nevada will be instrumental in advancing society's objectives and enriching the lives of Nevada's citizens.
- **Opportunity and Accessible Education for All** – Nevada's system of higher education will increase the overall participation and success of Nevadans enrolling at all levels of higher education and in all ethnic groups, and will address the unique educational needs of a highly diverse and non-traditional population.

The transfer practices among NSHE institutions are closely monitored to ensure student transfer success and achievement of the Board of Regents *Master Plan* goals. To that end, the Office of Academic and Student Affairs conducted a review of NSHE institution policies and practices in 2006 and again in 2008 to determine the extent to which NSHE institutions are complying with the transfer and articulation policies of the Board of Regents (*Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 13*).

The *2008 Articulation and Transfer Review* focused attention on the existence and publication of major-to-major articulation agreements (also known as two-plus-two agreements) between the universities, state college, and community colleges and year-by-year courses of study for each baccalaureate major. Articulation agreements identify the courses that should be taken at a community college and the additional courses that must be taken at the university or state college in order to earn a four-year degree within a selected program of study. In addition, as part of the *2008 Articulation and Transfer Review*, students were randomly selected who graduated with an associate degree from an NSHE community college and then transferred to UNLV, UNR, or NSC and their transcripts were reviewed to determine if lower-division general education requirements were acknowledged to be fulfilled and if junior status was granted to these students upon matriculation to the four-year institutions.

The *2008 Articulation and Transfer Review* was conducted with the assistance of the Academic Affairs Council, the Student Affairs Council, and the Articulation Board. Throughout April and May 2008, System staff visited each campus and conducted the review with institutional representatives. At these campus visits, institutional representatives provided written documentation on institutional practice compliance with Board policies, existing articulation agreements, and informational materials that are given to students interested in transferring to another NSHE institution.

This report includes the review findings and offers recommendations on how seamless transfer can be improved between NSHE institutions. The final section of the review highlights institutional practices and programs that assist students in the transfer process. The findings and recommendations herein are based on the verbal and written responses, catalog information, and other documentation that the institutions provided to demonstrate compliance with Board policies.

FINDINGS

Articulation Agreement

Board policy (*Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 13.1*) requires that each baccalaureate major offered by any NSHE institution have an articulation agreement with NSHE community colleges. The articulation agreement lays out a course of study whereby a student beginning their academic career at a community college can finish within the same period of time as a student who begins at a four-year institution. Articulation agreements are created at the time the major is initially approved by the Board of Regents and are updated as curriculum and course offerings change. Each articulation agreement should be readily available for student information, and each institution places this information in their respective catalogs and posts the agreements on their Web pages in accordance with Board policy.

Finding: UNLV, UNR, and NSC have all of their baccalaureate majors articulated with NSHE community colleges. This is a significant improvement over the *2006 Articulation and Transfer Review* when each institution was missing agreements. These agreements are posted on their respective Web sites and are easily accessible to students and community college advisors.

The *2008 Articulation and Transfer Review* included the baccalaureate programs offered at CSN (Dental Hygiene), GBC (Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Integrative Studies, Nursing, Bachelor of Applied Science) and WNC (Construction Management). GBC and WNC have articulated their respective baccalaureate programs with NSHE community colleges and publish these on the Web and in their catalogs. CSN does not have a current articulation agreement for their B.S. in Dental Hygiene.

CSN Recommendation: Create, publish, and communicate with NSHE community colleges an articulation agreement for the B.S. in Dental Hygiene by **January 15, 2009**.

Systemwide Recommendation: Each institution should incorporate the following statement into each articulation agreement, “Please note that all students who have earned an Associate of Arts, Associate of Business, or Associate of Science from an NSHE college are automatically admitted to UNLV, UNR, or NSC and are given credit for meeting all of the lower-division general education core curriculum requirements.” Students will be better informed of the assurances provided by Board policy and motivated to complete an associate degree.

FINDINGS

Year-by-Year Courses of Study

Each major, when approved by the Board of Regents, is presented with a semester-by-semester course of study. This serves as a planning guide for students to take the appropriate courses to graduate in the shortest time frame possible. This information is critical to student success as they plan their course of study. The information also ensures that students beginning at the community college can complete a baccalaureate degree in the same number of semesters as students beginning at UNLV, UNR, and NSC. Institutions are expected to make this sequence information available for use in student planning.

Finding: Each institution, except CSN, has each of the baccalaureate majors sequenced by semester and posted on their respective Web sites.

CSN Recommendation: Create, publish, and communicate with NSHE community colleges a year-by-year course of study for the B.S. in Dental Hygiene by **January 15, 2009**.

FINDINGS

Associate Degree Records

Board policy (*Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 13.1*) states:

The primary basis for admission to upper-division study with full junior status of transfer students from an NSHE community college to any other NSHE institution shall be the associate of arts, associate of science, and the associate of business degrees.

- a. *The completion of the associate of arts, associate of science, and associate of business degree at a community college automatically fulfills the lower-division general education requirements at any other NSHE institution.*

The 2008 *Articulation and Transfer Review* focused on whether or not students fulfilled the lower-division general education core requirements in the associate degree and if students had their lower-division general education requirements waived upon transfer to UNLV, UNR, or NSC. In other words, did the students fulfill their lower-division general education requirements at the community college and upon transfer, did the receiving institution waive the lower-division general education core or require the student to retake any of these courses.

Sixty-five students were randomly selected of those who received an associate degree from a NSHE community college during 2006 or 2007 and transferred to an NSHE university in Fall 2007. The courses listed on the student academic records were compared against the System core requirements and the respective university core requirements to make sure that the students fulfilled those requirements and received junior standing at UNLV or UNR.

Finding: Each of the randomly selected students fulfilled the lower-division general education requirement in accordance with Board policy and institutionally established core curriculum requirements. All students except one transferred to an NSHE university with junior or senior status. One student was incorrectly coded in the Student Information System (SIS) as a sophomore, rather than as a junior.

Systemwide Recommendation: Implement a business process in SIS to automatically code students with an earned NSHE associate degree with junior-level standing.

Institutional Transfer Services

NSHE institutions provide a variety of programs and services for students who transfer between NSHE institutions. Each NSHE institution has a transfer center and staff knowledgeable in the transfer process between NSHE institutions. Students receive appropriate information, including checklists, contact information, copies of articulation agreements, degree worksheets and courses of study, and suggestions for making transfer seamless.

Institutional representatives from the four-year institutions also visit community colleges to provide transfer information to students interested in transferring. In one instance, a scholarship is available for an NSHE community college student to transfer to one of our institutions. NSHE institutions are also increasing inter-institution communication regarding transfer issues. In addition to the systemwide Articulation Board, regional councils meet regularly to discuss issues particular to their region. The first statewide meeting of academic advisors occurred June 2008 where best practices in academic advising, including transferring between NSHE institutions, were discussed and reviewed. These statewide meetings will continue through the recently formed systemwide coalition of academic advisors.

Conclusion

The *2008 Articulation and Transfer Review* found that since the original 2006 transfer review significant strides have been made with respect to ensuring the seamless transfer of students from an NSHE community college to a four-year institution. In general, NSHE institutions are compliant with Board of Regents' policies related to articulation and transfer. With the exception of CSN and its B.S. in Dental Hygiene, NSHE institutions have created and appropriately posted articulation agreements for each baccalaureate major. Further, the institutions laid out the sequences of courses to complete the degree and honor the provisions provided by Board policy when a student transfers with an associate degree.

NSHE institutions also provide a variety of services assisting transfer students. From checklists to advising services, NSHE students are provided with good transfer information. Institutions do not merely wait for students to request transfer information and are proactive in reaching out to students to inform them about transfer options.

Given the marked improvements in the transfer process, transfer reviews will now be done on a periodic basis as needed or as requested by the Board of Regents. Institutions are doing a better job in maintaining articulation agreements and inter-institution communications concerning transfers continue to improve. NSHE institutions also improved their transfer-related outreach and information to students. The NSHE institutions are working well to provide a seamless transfer experience for students in order to meet the Board of Regents *Master Plan* objectives of the Nevada System of Higher Education.

Board of Regents' Handbook
Title 4, Chapter 14 (in part)

Section 13. NSHE Transfer and Admissions

Transfer students to the state college and universities may be admitted under the following alternatives:

1. Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Associate of Business Degree Graduates

The primary basis for admission to upper-division study with full junior status of transfer students from an NSHE community college to any other NSHE institution shall be the associate of arts, associate of science, and the associate of business degrees.

- a. The completion of the associate of arts, associate of science, and associate of business degree at a community college automatically fulfills the lower-division general education requirements at any other NSHE institution.
- b. Associate of arts, associate of science, and associate of business graduates will have completed a minimum of 60 credits of baccalaureate level courses.
- c. Baccalaureate students who have completed NSHE associate of arts, associate of science, or associate of business degree shall complete a minimum number of credits at the accepting NSHE institution. This minimum number shall be set by the baccalaureate degree granting institution.
- d. Baccalaureate level courses included as part of the associate of arts, associate of science, or associate of business degree will transfer to any other NSHE institution at a minimum as general elective credit.
- e. Completion of the associate of arts, associate of science, or the associate of business degree does not guarantee satisfaction of all state college or university lower-division requirements except for the lower-division general education requirements. All baccalaureate academic majors at a university or college must have current major-to-major agreements with NSHE community colleges. These agreements must provide clear information for community college students as to those courses that will transfer efficiently to another NSHE institution within each major. Information on these agreements must be available to all students on each campus.
- f. The receiving institution will evaluate all university and college parallel courses attempted at the community college (and any other educational institution attended) and compute an overall admission grade point average in accordance with the institution's transfer policies.
- g. For associate of arts, associate of science, and associate of business graduates, if the overall transfer grade point average computed by the receiving institution is less than a

2.0 grade point average, the student shall be placed on probationary status until such grade point deficiencies are corrected.

2. Other Associate Degrees

Other associate degrees and certificates may be awarded by a community college for programs that have requirements different from the associate of arts, associate of science, associate of business, or a primary objective of transfer. A student with an associate degree other than an associate of arts, associate of science, or associate of business is not guaranteed junior status at a receiving institution.

3. Associate of Applied Science and Bachelor of Applied Science Degrees

The Bachelor of Applied Science degree is a four-year occupationally specific degree that is intended to respond to the needs of the workforce. A student with an associate of applied science in a program approved by the Board of Regents seeking a Bachelor of Applied Science degree is guaranteed junior status upon transfer to another applicable NSHE institution.

4. Non-Associate Degree Admissions

- a. Approved baccalaureate level courses shall be transferable to another NSHE institution at a minimum as general elective credit.
- b. Community college students should be strongly encouraged to complete their lower-division programs and an associate degree before transfer, but qualified students may apply for transfer at their own discretion.
- c. An applicant who does not satisfy university admission requirements upon graduation from high school must complete the equivalent of 24 semester credits in baccalaureate level courses with an overall grade point average of at least 2.30 at a community college or other accredited institution to qualify for university admission. Effective Fall 2008, the minimum required overall grade point average is 2.50.
- d. An applicant who does not satisfy state college admission requirements upon graduation from high school must complete the equivalent of 12 semester credits in baccalaureate level courses with an overall grade point average of at least 2.00 at a community college or other accredited institution to qualify for state college admission.
- e. A course with a "D-" grade or better will be accepted for transfer provided the institution specific overall grade point average established in subsections c. and d. above is maintained. Transfer courses with a "D-" grade or better will count towards a bachelor's degree in the same manner as "D-" grades or better obtained by students enrolled in the lower-division at a state college or university. Credits from courses transferred with a "D-" grade or better count towards credit earned for a baccalaureate; however, it is at the discretion of the department or college offering the major as to whether courses with "D-" grades in the major satisfy requirements in the major field.