

# **2015 Transfer Report: A Review of Improvements in Transfer**

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## Summary

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) is charged with establishing transfer policies to improve student transitions and report progress to the Legislature on a biennial basis. Effective transfer policy requires continued engagement of the institutions and higher education agencies in the state. As a result, transfer policy is implemented and maintained through the cooperative efforts of all Washington institutions of higher education and WSAC.

This work is supported by many statewide in-sector and cross-sector groups and offices involved in various aspects of transfer. Two primary groups guiding and assessing the day-to-day effectiveness of transfer agreements are the Joint Transfer Council (JTC) and the Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC); their work is reflected in this report.

This report highlights the proportion of students who enroll in the community and technical colleges with intent to transfer, growth in the number of students completing coursework under transfer agreements designed to facilitate transfer to baccalaureate institutions without loss of credit, and continuous improvements in Washington's transfer system.

Transfer groups have made significant progress on a number of policy issues. Among the numerous improvements completed by their efforts over the past two years, the state has:

- Developed and implemented a new pathway for Nurses: the Associate in Nursing Direct Transfer Agreement Major Related Program.
- Initiated development of a Fine Arts/Music Major Related Program and a Computer Science Pathway.
- Adopted revisions and improvements to the Direct Transfer Agreement, including updates to the quantitative and symbolic reason requirements, elimination of several institution-specific provisos, and clarification of the physical education requirement.
- Reviewed and clarified use of the Associate of Science Transfer degree.
- Eliminated six Major Related Programs that were not attracting students.
- Updated Student Transfer Rights and Responsibilities and addressed student complaints regarding transfer through the Transfer Liaison on the Student Achievement Council staff.
- Initiated expansion of "Reverse Articulation" agreements.

Other system improvements include evaluation of the consistency of dual-credit programs like Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, expansion of prior learning assessment to reciprocity agreements within the community and technical college system, and development of a Joint Policy Brief on transfer.

Finally, the report lays out key work activities for the next two years. These activities are centered on exploring the feasibility of an integrated system report on transfer, evaluation of metrics to assess performance of transfer in Washington, and continuous improvement of existing transfer policies and practices.

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# Introduction

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) is tasked with “...improving student transitions from secondary to postsecondary education and training and between and among postsecondary institutions.”<sup>1</sup> Strong transfer policy is critical to student access and completion.

Transfer policy is implemented and maintained through the cooperative efforts of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the public and private institutions of higher education, and WSAC. This work is accomplished by many statewide in-sector and cross-sector groups and offices involved in various aspects of transfer. Two primary groups guiding and assessing the day-to-day effectiveness of transfer agreements across the system are the Joint Transfer Council (JTC) and the Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC).

Since the development of the first Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) over 40 years ago, more than 600,000 students have used this pathway to move from our community and technical colleges to public and private baccalaureate institutions in Washington.<sup>2</sup> These agreements support three of WSAC’s core objectives: increased access, persistence, and attainment, while improving affordability, but without sacrificing quality.

Almost 70 percent of Washington students transferring with an associate degree earn a bachelor’s degree. This is over three times the national average of 20 percent.<sup>3</sup> More than 40 percent of all bachelor’s degrees awarded at public colleges and universities are awarded to students who have transferred from a Washington community or technical college.<sup>4</sup> And 33 percent of all students attending independent colleges and universities in Washington are transfer students.<sup>5</sup>

WSAC has a statutory responsibility to establish and adopt transfer policies, improve educational transitions, and deliver a biennial report to the Legislature that:

1. Reports progress on transfer indicators
2. Outlines development of additional transfer associate degrees, and
3. Describes other improvements in transfer efficiency.<sup>6</sup>

The 2014 Strategic Action Plan outlines two attainment goals to be achieved by 2023: all adults ages 25-44 will have a high school diploma or equivalent; and at least 70 percent of Washington adults, ages 25-44, will have a postsecondary credential. Continuing improvements in transfer outlined in this report will contribute to achieving the second of these goals.

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 28B.77.001

<sup>2</sup> 600,000 is a conservative estimate based on a review of SBCTC Academic Year Reports from 1971 to the present

<sup>3</sup> Source: *Partnering for Student Transfer Success*

[http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/general/documents/2015\\_Joint\\_OnePager\\_transfer\\_final.pdf](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/general/documents/2015_Joint_OnePager_transfer_final.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Source: *SBCTC Research Report No. 13-5: Role of Transfer in the Attainment of Baccalaureate Degrees at Washington Public Bachelor’s Degree Institutions Class of 2011*. August 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Independent Colleges and Universities in Washington Factbook available at [http://www.icwashington.org/publications/2014\\_ICW\\_factbook\\_spreads\\_web.pdf](http://www.icwashington.org/publications/2014_ICW_factbook_spreads_web.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> 28B.77.210, 28B.77.215, and 28B.77.220

## What is Transfer?

**Transfer** is the process whereby a student moves from one college to another, and the student's work at the sending institution is applied toward degree requirements at the receiving institution.

Students transfer for many reasons, and there is a great deal of diversity in types of institutions students attend. The process can be complicated by the fact that many students who transfer attend more than two institutions before receiving a degree or certificate.

As a result, clear transfer policies are required so that students are treated fairly in transitions and can understand, in advance, the process and implications of transferring from one institution to another. In addition, the institution that ultimately awards the degree must validate that the student has met the learning outcomes associated with any degree they award. For that reason, agreement about expectations and outcomes across the system is an important part of transfer policy.

Like most other states, transfer policy in Washington has been focused primarily on **vertical transfer**, which generally refers to a student who is transferring from a community or technical college to a baccalaureate institution that awards a bachelor's degree. While vertical transfer is the most common transfer pathway, and is supported by state policy, it is important to note other paths students take.

Other transfer pathways include:

1. **Horizontal Transfer**, in which a student transfers between two institutions that award degrees at the same level. For example:
  - a. Transfer between two community or technical colleges.
  - b. Transfer between two baccalaureate institutions.
2. **Reverse Transfer** is the transfer of a student or student credits from an institution that awards a higher degree level to one that awards at a lower degree level. For example, either of the following:
  - a. A student may transfer from a baccalaureate institution to a community or technical college (CTC).
  - b. A student who transfers from the community college or technical college to a baccalaureate institution without completing a transfer degree may transfer credits back to the CTC for degree completion.
3. **Swirling** is movement back and forth among institutions. This generally refers to students' movement between community or technical colleges and baccalaureate institutions two or more times.

## Washington State Transfer Degrees

Washington employs two statewide transfer agreements to support transfer, the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) and the Associate of Science–Transfer (AS–T). In addition, the state has ten Major Related Programs (MRP), which are course plans that fit within either the DTA or the AST.

Students completing any of these transfer degrees are generally ensured 90 transferrable quarter credits (even if they change majors) and enter the baccalaureate institution with junior class standing. Transfer credits may include up to 15 quarter credits for “technical” courses that may not transfer outside the degree. In addition, the agreements stipulate that students would not be required to retake courses or course sequences they have already completed.

The agreements are designed to serve students entering a variety of majors, but all fit within the following framework:

- **Direct Transfer Agreement Associate Degree (DTA):** 60 quarter credits of general education courses, plus courses that prepare students for classes in their major and electives.
- **Associate of Science–Transfer (AS–T):** Includes the math and science courses needed to prepare students for biology, chemistry, earth science, physics, computer science, and engineering majors. Fewer general education courses are taken at the community college to allow space for additional math and science. No more than 20 quarter credits of general education remain to be completed at the receiving institution.
- **Major Related Program (MRP):** Course plans under the DTA or AS-T that prepare students for specific majors. Course plans include general education courses and a limited number of electives. MRPs are developed for majors that are offered at multiple baccalaureate institutions, have significant prerequisites in the freshmen and/or sophomore year, and serve a large number of students.

In addition, the Associate in Applied Science (AAS–T) is a workforce degree developed to meet industry standards for immediate employment. A characteristic of the AAS–T is a minimum of 20 credits of general education courses drawn from the same list as those taken by students completing the DTA degree or the AS–T degree. Students completing these degrees at community and technical colleges may apply up to 90 credits toward specific applied baccalaureate degrees.

## Progress on Transfer Indicators

Progress indicators for transfer provide information about student interest in transfer, completion of transfer degrees, and completion of vertical transfer. This section will address selected transfer measures, including:

1. Intent to transfer
2. Completion of transfer degrees and MRPs
3. Successful vertical transfer
4. Completion data for the public four-year institutions

### Intent to Transfer

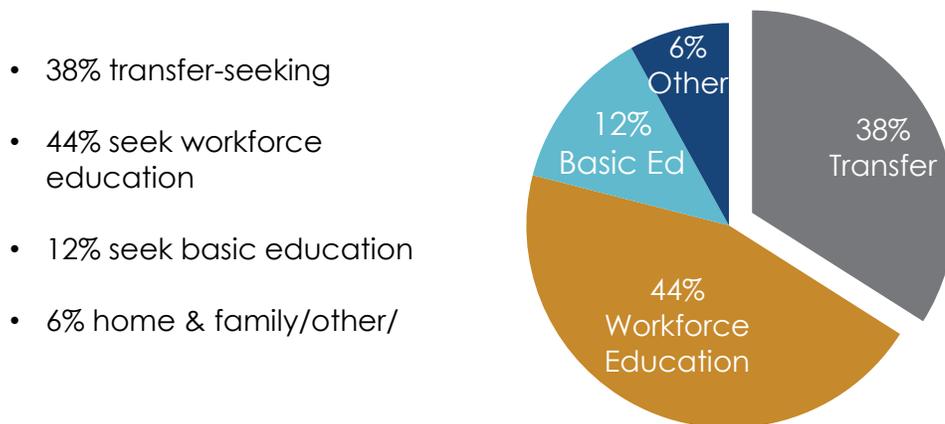
In the 2013-14 academic year, 107,161 state-supported students indicated an intent to transfer in the community and technical college system. This was a two percent decrease from 2012-13 that followed an almost four percent decrease from 2011-12.

Decreases in the percent of students entering community and technical colleges with intent to transfer was not unexpected. Total community and technical college enrollments declined for the third year after peak enrollments in 2010-11.<sup>7</sup> Factors that may have influenced these declines include smaller cohorts of high school graduates, an improving economy resulting in more students returning to the workforce, tuition increases during the recession, and reduced financial aid availability in the form of State Need Grant and Opportunity Grants.

Although the number of students who declared transfer intent decreased over the past two years, the proportion of students increased slightly from 37 percent in 2011-12 to 38 percent in 2013-14. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of student purpose for attending.

The Community and Technical Colleges serve many students whose primary purpose for attending college is to get a job—or a better job. Some of these students will transfer, but it is important to remember that many do not intend to pursue further education at a baccalaureate college at this time.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Community College Students by Purpose of Attending, 2013-14**



Source: SBCTC (2014). Headcount by Purpose of Attending – State Supported. SBCTC Data Warehouse. Academic Year Report <http://sbctc.edu/college/d-acad2013-14.aspx>

### Completion of Transfer Degrees and Major Related Programs

The Direct Transfer Agreement, Associate in Science–Transfer, and Major Related Programs based on these two transfer degrees were designed to facilitate the movement of students from community and technical colleges to baccalaureate institutions without loss of credit.

#### *Direct Transfer Agreement and Associate of Science–Transfer*

During 2013-14, 16,255 students completed the DTA degree (Table 1). This represents slightly over a three percent increase since our 2013 report, which included the 2011-12 academic year (highlighted below). More than 1,100 students completed the science related transfer degree (AS–T) during 2013-14, an increase of 16 percent since 2011-12.

<sup>7</sup> SBCTC 2013-14 Annual Year Report available at <http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/d-acad2013-14.aspx>.

Increases since 2009-10 demonstrate ongoing and continued expansion of these two major transfer degree pathways. DTA completions increased over 23 percent since 2009-10, and AS-T completions increased over 62 percent. This reflects the growing emphasis on science and technology related degrees in Washington.

**Table 1. Community College Students Following Transfer Degree Pathways**

Transfer Associate Degree	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Change since 2009-10
Direct Transfer Agreement	13,243	15,362	15,729	16,354	16,255	23%
Associate in Science–Transfer	730	821	1,018	1,138	1,184	62%
<b>Total Transfer Degree Pathways</b>	<b>13,973</b>	<b>16,183</b>	<b>16,747</b>	<b>17,492</b>	<b>17,439</b>	<b>25%</b>

Source: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. (2014). SBCTC Academic Year Report 2013-14

### *Major Related Programs*

Of the students completing a transfer degree, 13 percent (2,293 total students) completed a specialized Major Related Program (MRP) degree that follows the DTA or AS-T. These programs are designed to prepare students for specific majors that have significant freshman and/or sophomore prerequisites, are offered at multiple baccalaureate institutions, and serve many students.

There are 10 Major Related Programs (including two AS-T MRPs that have 3 tracks each (see Appendix for a complete list). The majority of students, over 80 percent, completed specialized transfer pathways for a major in business or pre-nursing.

Table 2 shows the year-to-year change in the number of students who completed Major Related Programs. These programs are advising pathways that fit within either a DTA or AS-T and therefore represent a sub-set of the totals in Table 1 above.

**Table 2. Community College Students Completing DTA and AS-T Based Major Related Program Transfer Pathways**

MRP Pathway	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Change since 2011-12
Business (DTA)	1,146	1,307	1,475	29%
Pre-Nursing (DTA)	302	408	397	31%
Other DTA/MRP & Local Agreements	188	122	250	33%
AS-T MRP*	98	117	171	74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,734</b>	<b>2,014</b>	<b>2,293</b>	<b>32%</b>

Source: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. (2014). SBCTC Academic Year Report 2013-14.

\*AS-T MRPs include: Biology and Chemical Engineering (14 graduates); Computer and Electrical Engineering (40); Mechanical, Civil, Aeronautical, Industrial and Materials Science Engineering (115); and Associate in Mechanical Engineering Technology (2).

## Successful Vertical Transfer

In 2014, the total number of transfer students was 20,105. This represents a four percent increase since our 2013 report, which included the 2011-12 academic year (Table 3). Transfers to independent institutions increased 13 percent since 2012-13. This emphasizes the importance all sectors play in transfer within Washington and support by almost universal acceptance of our statewide transfer degrees by independent institutions.

In addition, a new category added in the past two years includes students transferring to upper-division applied bachelor's programs at the community and technical colleges. Transfers from community and technical colleges to applied bachelor's degree programs at the community and technical colleges (both from within the same college and from other colleges and universities) continue to grow—more than tripling in the past two years, with over 400 transfers in the 2013-14 academic year.<sup>8</sup>

Community and technical colleges play an increasingly important role in producing baccalaureate degree graduates in Washington State and will substantially contribute to meeting our state attainment goal of at least 70 percent of Washington adults, ages 25 to 44, completing a postsecondary credential by 2023.

**Table 3: Trend in Transfers and Transitions to Washington Baccalaureate Institutions<sup>9</sup>**

Sector	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Change since 2011-12
<b>Transfer to Public Baccalaureates<sup>1,2</sup></b>	15,223	16,536	15,362	1%
<b>Transfer to Independent Institutions<sup>3</sup></b>	3,824	3,313	4,331	13%
<b>Transfer into CTC Applied Bachelor's<sup>1</sup></b>	311	329	412	32%
<b>Total Transfers/Transitions</b>	<b>19,358</b>	<b>20,178</b>	<b>20,105</b>	<b>4%</b>

Source: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. (2014). SBCTC Academic Year Report 2013-14.

<sup>1</sup> Publics include state and self-support transfers, transfers to Portland State University and University of Idaho, and authorized private Western Governors University-Washington.

<sup>2</sup> Running Start students transferring directly to the public baccalaureate institutions are included.

<sup>3</sup> Includes both non- and for-profit institutions. Data does not include DeVry University.

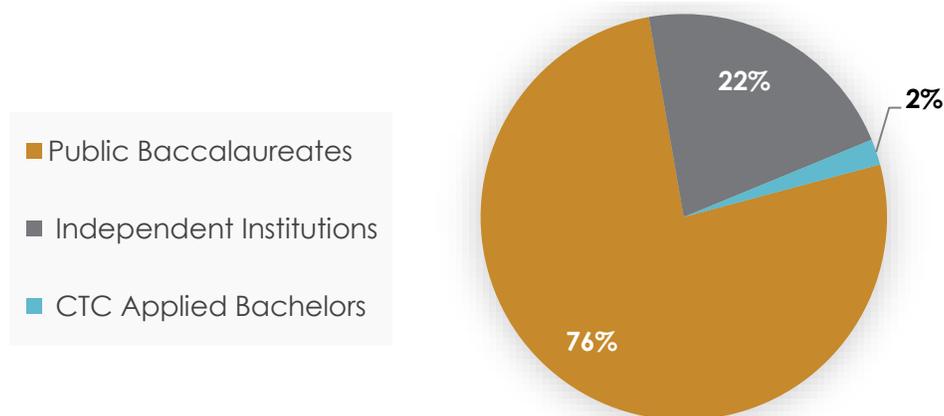
The number of successful transfers exceeds the number of transfer degree completers because many students transfer before completion of their associate degree requirements. More than 20,000 students transferred credits from community and technical colleges to public and private baccalaureate programs in Washington in 2013-14.<sup>10</sup> Of these, 76 percent (15,362 students) transferred to the public four-year institutions. Figure 2 provides a breakdown of student transfer by sector for 2013-14.

<sup>8</sup> More information on BAS degrees is available at [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e\\_appliedbaccalaureates.aspx](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e_appliedbaccalaureates.aspx).

<sup>9</sup> These are vertical transfers, community and technical college to baccalaureate institutions.

<sup>10</sup> State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. (2014). SBCTC Academic Year Report 2013-14.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Transfer Students to Baccalaureate Programs by Sector, 2013-14**



### Data for the Public Four-Year Institutions

The Council of Presidents' Statewide Public Four-Year Dashboard allows for detailed reporting on transfer students to this sector.<sup>11</sup> The Office of Financial Management worked with the six public universities and colleges to create this centralized dashboard that displays a number of accountability measures that include transfer, graduation rates, and the time it takes to complete a bachelor's degree for each institution and statewide. Following is a transfer snapshot from the dashboard for academic years 2012-13 and 2013-14:

1. **Transfer as entering status.** Statewide, transfer as an entering status for students remained constant. Just over 39,000 undergraduate students entered the public baccalaureates as transfer students each year, representing 37 percent of all entering students.
2. **Full-time/part-time attendance.** The percentage of transfer students who complete a full-time load within their first academic year remained constant for both years, at 74 percent.
3. **Time to baccalaureate degree.** The average undergraduate time to degree (in years) for full time transfer students (after transfer) for both years was 2.50 and 2.48 respectively.
4. **Credits to degree.** The average undergraduate credits to degree for full-time students entering directly from high school was 195.8 in 2012-13. This compares to 200 for transfer students during the same academic year, or about four more total credits for transfer students. This differential increased slightly in 2013-14 to five more credits for transfer students.
5. **Graduation rate with DTA/AST.** The three-year graduation rate for DTA/AST transfer students who entered in fall 2010 was just over 71 percent and climbed to 75.5 percent four years after transfer.
6. **Graduation rate without transfer degree.** Transfer students **without** the DTA/AST transfer degrees did not complete at the same rate; 63.5 percent completed in three years, and just over 68 percent completed within four years of transfer.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/hied/dashboard/index.html>

## Development of New Transfer Degrees and Other Improvements in Transfer Efficiency

Transfer policy is implemented and maintained through the cooperative efforts of many statewide in-sector and cross-sector groups and offices involved in various aspects of transfer. Two primary groups guiding and assessing the day-to-day effectiveness of transfer agreements and implementing improvements across the system are the Joint Transfer Council (JTC) and the Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC).

Following is a brief summary of a new degree and other substantial improvements made in transfer over the past two years. These areas of improvement represent the efforts of thousands of faculty and staff from all sectors working together to create a dynamic system of transfer in Washington.

- 1. Developed NEW Nursing degree pathway.** The existing Pre-Nursing DTA/MRP has seen tremendous growth over the past three years. That MRP prepares students to transfer into a Bachelor of Science Nursing degree program at the university level. It is not a Registered Nursing (RN) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) pathway.

With impending nursing shortages and a national movement toward more BSN-trained nurses, there was a need to streamline the pathway for students moving from the Associate Degree in Nursing to Bachelor of Nursing (RN licensed) degree programs. A workgroup was established and began meeting in 2012 and finalized work on a new Nursing Direct Transfer Associate Degree in 2014.

The new Associate in Nursing DTA/MRP is a pathway that recognizes that students complete nursing pre-requisites, general education requirements and their pre-licensure nursing coursework at a community or technical college with a minimum of three years of study. Graduates of this degree may then continue more efficiently than in the past to a college or university that offers a post-licensure RN-to-BSN program to complete RN-to-BSN work in one year.

Innovative work was required to bring this nursing pathway to fruition and to prepare both colleges and students for implementation, including:

- Alignment of nursing prerequisites and core courses among community and technical colleges offering the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN).
- Development and approval of three new nursing core courses: Ethics and Policy in Healthcare, Psychosocial Issues in Healthcare, and Nutrition in Healthcare. These will be cross-listed as nursing and general education courses and transcribed as general education (humanities, social science, and science, respectively) to facilitate transfer to baccalaureate institutions.
- Development of frequently asked questions for both institutions implementing the degree and students interested in this new pathway, as well as advising documents addressing transition issues for students.

- Other issues being addressed include students moving from Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) certification and AAS-T Nursing degrees to this new degree pathway.

Currently SBCTC is convening meetings for early-adopting colleges of the Nursing DTA/MRP degree to assist with program development and the approval process through the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission.

- 2. Convened NEW Associate of Fine Arts/Music workgroup.** The JTC heard concerns from community and technical colleges that students transferring to baccalaureate institutions in Music were taking longer to complete degrees than students admitted directly as freshman to those institutions. The JTC established a workgroup to explore an Associate of Fine Arts/Music MRP. The workgroup is convened by WSAC and has developed two options that are being reviewed by colleges and universities.
- 3. Initiated development of a NEW Computer Science Pathway.** There is wide interest across the state in developing a clear transfer pathway for community and technical college students seeking a degree in computer science. This work is also encouraged by legislators who want to increase computer science degree production. The JTC took action to address this need. Information was collected on requirements for all public and private baccalaureate computer science programs in the state. In addition, the community and technical colleges administered a survey to their computer science faculty, staff, and administrators to determine what was working well and where improvements could be made. The most consistent message was that the current AS-T, though appropriate for computer engineering, was not working as well as anticipated for computer science majors, and that extensive advising is required.

The goal of this review was to determine if a transfer guide could be developed to support students on a computer science pathway or if a computer science transfer degree could be developed. This work is ongoing, with a workgroup convened in early 2015.

- 4. Updated Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA).** Through the cooperative work of the ICRC, JTC, and several within-sector commissions and councils, updates were made to the DTA, including:
  - a. An update of the quantitative and symbolic reason requirement.
  - b. Elimination or clarification of several institution-specific provisos attached to the DTA.
  - c. Clarification of the definition of physical education activity courses and credit limits within the DTA.
- 5. Reviewed acceptance of the Associate of Science–Transfer (AS-T).** This agreement was intended to allow transfer students seeking a major in STEM fields to be on par with students admitted to baccalaureate institutions as freshman also seeking STEM majors. Fewer general education courses are taken at the community college to allow space for additional math and science coursework. Although it was determined the AS-T is working well, particularly for engineering students, there was a concern that some universities or four-year colleges might be requiring more additional courses than intended.

After review by colleges and universities, language in the agreement was clarified to indicate that no more than 20 quarter credits of general education remain to be completed at the receiving institution. There do not appear to be any further issues regarding credit transfer and general education requirements being fulfilled, but the JTC continues to review all AS-T tracks for relevance to workforce needs.

- 6. Reverse articulation implemented.** Reverse articulation allows eligible students to receive their associate degree after transferring to a baccalaureate institution. Students who transfer prior to completing their associate degree would complete any remaining requirements as part of their baccalaureate program and articulate credits back to the community or technical college to receive their associate degree. The first agreement was signed between Western Governors University–Washington and SBCTC in 2013. Since then additional agreements have been signed between the SBCTC and both Eastern Washington University and Washington State University. Further discussions on expanding this to other colleges and universities in the state are ongoing.
- 7. Eliminated unused Elementary Education DTA/MRP.** The Elementary Education MRP was established in 2005. Since that time, curricular changes at universities have created a mismatch between community and technical college programs and those at baccalaureate institutions. A workgroup of baccalaureate education directors met to address these issues and determined that individual articulation agreements between community and technical colleges and baccalaureate education programs work better for students than a statewide agreement. The Education MRP was removed as an option in 2014 with a two-year window for students currently enrolled in the program to complete the degree by 2016.
- 8. Evaluated and eliminated other unused MRPs.** In addition to the Elementary Education DTA/MRP, the JTC and system stakeholders evaluated MRPs developed since 2003 and determined several were not being used by students. The MRPs listed below were eliminated, effective fall 2014, because they had limited enrollments and no graduates over the past five years. A two-year window to “teach-out” any remaining students currently enrolled in these programs was provided. The MRPs eliminated were:
  - a. Associate in Biology Education
  - b. Associate in Chemistry Education
  - c. Associate in Earth Space Education
  - d. Associate in General Science Education
  - e. Associate in Physics Education
- 9. Updated Student Transfer Rights and Responsibilities.** Earlier agreements among public universities regarding reciprocity in higher education requirements when a student has completed those requirements at one institution and then transfers to another were codified by the Legislature in 2011 in House Bill 1795. The Student Transfer Rights and Responsibilities document was updated to reflect this language. HB 1795 also codified the long-standing agreement that students who transfer with an associate degree are deemed to have met all lower-division, university general education requirements at public universities. The JTC worked to ensure colleges and universities were publicizing this statutory language, and the ICRC updated language in the Transfer Handbook to reflect these updates.

**10. Colleges updated transfer websites.** College transfer websites were updated to include more information for students interested in transfer, reflect updates to the Student Transfer Rights and Responsibilities document mentioned above, and provide a link to the Transfer Liaison (see below) for students to report issues with transfer. In addition, there is greater consistency and transparency in the transfer process through materials published in college documents, recruitment materials, and on web pages.

**11. Revising the *Student Guide to Transfer in Washington*.** In fall 2011, a *Student Guide to Transfer in Washington* was developed by the JTC and was printed and posted on college websites. This guide describes associate degree transfer options, provides information in an easily accessible question-and-answer format, and offers links for further information. Revisions to this publication were initiated in 2014 and will be completed in 2015.

**12. State Transfer Liaison activity.**<sup>12</sup> In 2011 the JTC proposed a Transfer Liaison to collect data on and address student issues across the system. This was part of an effort to continuously improve the transfer system in Washington and address concerns that the system does not work well for some students. The Transfer Liaison was established on the WSAC staff and began collecting data and addressing student issues related to transfer. JTC representatives reviewed college websites to ensure mention of the Transfer Liaison process for students.

Updates are provided to the JTC at their quarterly meeting. As a point of reference, in 2012 (the first year of the Liaison) there were 17 contacts related to transfer, with 95 percent resolved to the student's satisfaction. Since that time the number of transfer issues has declined and averages about 6 concerns per year. No systemic issues have been identified by the Transfer Liaison since the position began.

**13. Reviewed consistency of Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Cambridge Examination scores.** The JTC participated in system-wide discussions regarding consistency and alignment of AP, IB, and Cambridge test scores in regards to transfer. Improvements in alignment and information about these programs can lead to more successful transfer for students.

Discussions continue regarding alignment of test scores for these examinations within the community and technical colleges and baccalaureate institutions, and proposals have been submitted for review and approval by their respective systems.

**14. Added Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credits to reciprocity agreement and clarified data notation for PLA.** SBCTC added PLA to their current Inter-College Reciprocity Agreement. This agreement allows that for "transfer among [community and technical] colleges, it is important to ensure that [students] are not penalized by the differences in the specific requirements imposed by individual campuses within the general guidelines of the Transfer degrees (DTA and AS-T) as approved by the Instruction Commission [of the community and technical colleges]."

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<sup>12</sup> The initial report is available at <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/TransferLiaisonIssues-2011rev09Nov11.pdf>. A form to report issues is available at <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/transfers>.

In addition, the community and technical colleges developed a methodology for coding and transcribing nontraditional college courses that will contribute to clear data collection of PLA and dual credit (e.g. AP, IB, and Cambridge) courses that can be used in analysis of transfer trends.<sup>13</sup>

The PLA workgroup is composed of members from all sectors across the system and convened by WSAC to coordinate and implement seven goals described in statute for promoting the award of college credit for prior learning (RCW 28B.77.230). Progress of the PLA workgroup is addressed in a separate report.<sup>14</sup>

**15. Joint Policy Brief developed.** The Council of Presidents and SBCTC produced a summary brief on transfer: *Partnering for Student Transfer Success*. This two-page information brief summarizes how Washington institutions work together to address factors identified in national research that lead to efficient and successful transfer.<sup>15</sup>

## Next Steps to Improve Student Transfer and Increase Baccalaureate Degree Attainment

**1. Convene cross-sector group to investigate the feasibility of a Combined Transfer Report.** This WSAC Transfer Report relies heavily on research completed by SBCTC, the Office of Financial Management Education Research and Data Center, and the Council of Presidents representing the public baccalaureate institutions in Washington. In addition, the Independent Colleges of Washington and other institutions and state agencies play an important role in transfer and should be considered for inclusion in a combined transfer report workgroup.

Each of these groups completes reports on different aspects of transfer.<sup>16</sup> It is recommended that representatives from each of these entities meet to explore the feasibility of developing a transfer report that meets the requirements of legislation and the needs of educational stakeholders in Washington. This combined report would clearly articulate how transfer is contributing to the educational attainment goals established for Washington State.

**2. Develop improved metrics to track progress and success of transfer students.** A component of the work completed by the workgroup mentioned above, our improving data systems provide great potential for better systems to track student progress and evaluate transfer policy. The workgroup and other stakeholders will evaluate current metrics for transfer and develop other metrics if needed to be used in subsequent reports.

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<sup>13</sup> This policy is available at <http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/it/CreditforNon-TraditionalLearning-Final05292014.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Available at <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/PreparingForCollege/PriorLearningCredit>.

<sup>15</sup> This informative document is available at [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/general/documents/2015\\_Joint\\_OnePager\\_transfer\\_final.pdf](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/general/documents/2015_Joint_OnePager_transfer_final.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> See the following sites for examples: [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/d\\_research-reports.aspx](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/d_research-reports.aspx); [http://councilofpresidents.org/index-2\\_r\\_d.html](http://councilofpresidents.org/index-2_r_d.html); <http://www.erd.c.wa.gov/>; <http://www.icwashington.org/>; [http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Pubs\\_Publications.asp](http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Pubs_Publications.asp).

3. **Continue assessment and review of MRPs.** Work with stakeholders to develop additional MRPs in majors where it makes sense to do so. The Associate of Fine Arts workgroup will complete its work in 2015 and make recommendations to the JTC. A workgroup addressing the growing need for an agreement specific to a Computer Science MRP had its first meeting in April 2015. The JTC will continue to review participation and graduation data for current MRPs to determine if they should be continued, reviewed and updated, or eliminated.
4. **Continue to monitor transfer issues via the Transfer Liaison** to alert the JTC, ICRC, colleges, universities, and state agencies if systemic issues arise.
5. **Coordinate with the PLA workgroup**<sup>16</sup> as they address issues related to transfer of credit earned through prior learning assessment, including military training and experience.

## Conclusion

More than 60 percent of the students who access higher education in Washington do so first at a community or technical college,<sup>17</sup> and more than 40 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded at public colleges and universities are awarded to students who have transferred.<sup>18</sup> Strong transfer policy is critical to student access and completion, and critical for Washington to meet its educational attainment goals.

Achieving our goals of increased student attainment will require continued collaboration and new levels of integration and focus within our educational system. We continue to move forward as an educational system with a comprehensive, integrated approach to transfer across all sectors for all students. We have made substantial progress and, as evidenced by this report, all those involved in transfer of students in Washington are committed to continuous improvement of our system.

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<sup>17</sup> Source: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

<sup>18</sup> Source: [SBCTC Research Report No. 13-5](#): Role of Transfer in the Attainment of Baccalaureate Degrees at Washington Public Bachelor's Degree Institutions Class of 2011. August 2013.

## **Appendix: Major Related Programs**

Students in some majors must carefully select their elective and general education courses to ensure they will be eligible to apply for the major after transferring to a baccalaureate institution. Colleges and universities have developed major-specific agreements (referred to as “major-related programs” or MRPs) for these majors to ensure community college students complete requirements in a manner parallel to university freshmen and sophomores.

These agreements have been developed under both the DTA and AS-T degree path. Five MRPs were eliminated effective 2014 because no student had graduated from them over the past five years. Existing MRPs and those eliminated are noted below.

### **MRP Pathways Based on the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA)**

1. NEW: Associate of Nursing DTA/MRP. Preparation for licensure as a Registered Nurse through Washington community and technical colleges, as well as entry into a Bachelor of Science in Nursing completion program. Effective fall 2014.
2. Associate in Biology DTA/MRP. Preparation in upper-division bachelor’s programs in Biology. Approved summer 2009.
3. Associate in Construction Management DTA/MRP. Approved spring 2008.
4. Associate in Technology DTA/MRP. Preparation for CWU’s Construction Management, Safety and Health Management, Industrial Technology & Technology Education or EWU’s Design, Construction, Manufacturing, and Electronics Technology. Approved winter 2007.
5. Associate in Technology DTA/MRP. Preparation for CWU’s industrial technology and EWU’s technology majors. Implemented 2007.
6. Associate in Business DTA/MRP. Preparation for business and accounting bachelor’s degree programs. Implemented in 2003, revised in 2006 and 2012. Effective July 1, 2012.
7. Associate in Pre-Nursing Science DTA/MRP. Preparation to transfer into basic nursing programs. (Not an RN to BSN pathway, which was implemented in 2014). Implemented 2005.
8. Associate in Math Education DTA/MRP. Preparation for teacher certification programs in secondary math. Implemented 2003.
  - Associate in Earth Space Secondary Education DTA/MRP. Preparation for secondary teaching in earth and space science. Eliminated effective fall 2014.
  - Associate in Elementary Education DTA/MRP. Preparation for teacher certification programs. Implemented in 2005. Reviewed and eliminated winter 2014.

## **MRP Pathways Based on the Associate in Science (AS-T)**

9. Three Engineering Tracks - REVISED 2008 Bioengineering and Chemical Engineering, Computer and Electrical Engineering, and Mechanical/Civil/Aeronautical/Industrial/Materials Science Engineering AS-T/MRP. Preparation for engineering transfer. Implemented in 2005, Revised summer 2008, effective fall 2009.
10. Three Engineering Technology Tracks - Electronics Engineering Tech, Computer Engineering Tech, and Mechanical Engineering Tech AS-T/MRP. Preparation for engineering technology transfer. Implemented 2007.
  - Four secondary science teacher pathways: Associate in Biology Education; Associate in Chemistry Education; Associate in General Science Education; and Associate in Physics Education AS-T/MRP. Preparation for teacher certification in secondary sciences. Implemented 2003. All eliminated effective fall 2014.