

SREB

Clearing Paths to College Degrees:

Transfer Policies in SREB States

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A FOCUS REPORT IN THE *CHALLENGE TO LEAD* SERIES

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This report is part of the *Challenge to Lead* education goals series, directed by Joan M. Lord. A full list of the goals, with publications describing SREB states' progress toward them, is printed on the inside back cover. For more information, e-mail joan.lord@sreb.org. Details about the SREB *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education are available on the SREB Web site at www.sreb.org.

Clearing Paths to College Degrees: *Transfer Policies in SREB States*

How do you know if your state is making progress toward more college-educated citizens? The percentages of students earning degrees or certificates from technical institutes, community colleges and four-year colleges increase to exceed national averages.

From the SREB *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education

Many policy-makers — and more importantly, the general public — assume that public colleges in their states have worked out agreements so that students who earn associate’s degrees at a two-year college can enroll as juniors if they transfer to a four-year college. They assume that students understand the policies that affect the transfer of course credits from one college to another — and that transferring is easy.

Too often in the past, however, students have had difficulty making the move to a new college. Many have lost hard-earned credits — often because they did not have the accurate information they needed. SREB’s 1995 report *Helping Students Who Transfer From Two-Year to Four-Year Colleges* lamented that states’ college transfer policies forced too many students “to work their way through a tangle of conflicting policies, practices and advice.” The report went on to ask, “How can we draw better maps for these students?” Today, many state leaders recognize that students in SREB states need clearer paths — not just better maps — leading to college degrees.

Students in SREB states need clearer paths — not just better maps — to college degrees.

This report looks at actions SREB states have taken in recent years to improve the connections between public two- and four-year colleges, and it offers suggestions on what needs to happen next. To best understand the progress in your state, you as a policy-maker or education leader need to ask about the effectiveness of your state’s college transfer policies, particularly as these policies have developed in the last 10 years. Two key questions you need to ask:

- What are the key statewide agreements and policies that help students move from one college to another — and does my state have them?
- How does my state know whether students are able to make smooth transfers?

FIRST QUESTION:

What are the key statewide agreements and policies that help students move from one college to another — and does my state have them?

All SREB states have developed some statewide policies for transferring course credits, and nearly all SREB states report improvements in transfer processes in the last 10 years. In 13 states, legislation has been enacted specifically to create statewide policies for transferring credits among public two- and four-year colleges: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. While Delaware, Georgia and Mississippi do not have specific legislation related to transfer policies, postsecondary institutions and governing or coordinating boards have established transfer policies and procedures in these states.

Nearly all SREB states report that there have been improvements in transfer processes in the last 10 years.

Most SREB states have a *statewide agreement* that governs how students transfer among all of the public colleges in the state system. These agreements generally are based on the transfer of the core curriculum courses offered by all institutions in the state's higher education system. The agreements, in some cases, are facilitated by a system of common course titles and numbers used by all institutions in a state system. In some states, these agreements also establish requirements for the first two years of specific academic programs or majors, such as education or business.

Institutions that are a part of statewide agreements for the transfer of core curriculum credits also may have *bilateral agreements* with other institutions for the transfer of credit related to highly specialized majors. These are usually based on specific program requirements that are not covered by statewide agreements — for example, between an engineering or nursing program at a two-year college and another at a four-year university.

In states that do not have statewide agreements for core curriculum courses, bilateral agreements for the core curriculum are common. Bilateral agreements, however, are limited — particularly to the two institutions that establish them. Students often find that course credits acceptable at the institution they planned to attend are not accepted at another they later decide to attend.

Statewide agreements, on the other hand, typically include all public two- and four-year institutions in a state. They establish transfer policies and procedures that enable students to move more smoothly from one institution to another by receiving credit for their prior work.

Whether through statewide or bilateral agreements, these efforts help clear paths through the transfer process for students because they:

- assure students that credits they earn toward completion of a program at one institution will apply toward completion of the same degree at another;
- provide clear information to students moving from one institution to another; and,
- eliminate delays in program completion because of unnecessary repetition of course work.

Keys to successful transfer programs in SREB states

Successful college transfer programs in SREB states have a number of common elements that help ensure that students can transfer credits from one institution to another with relative ease.

Transfer/articulation committees: A statewide transfer committee oversees the state's transfer policies and practices. It generally includes representatives from public (and sometimes non-public) two- and four-year colleges and universities, postsecondary technical or vocational institutions, and postsecondary education coordinating and/or governing boards. The committee works to ensure that state and institutional policies and practices work together to enable students to transfer smoothly from one institution to another.

- All SREB states except Delaware have established transfer committees. In SREB states, many of these committees have been in place for a long time. Florida's Articulation Coordinating Committee was created in 1971, for example. The North Carolina Joint Committee on College Transfer (now the Transfer Advisory Committee) was established by the North Carolina Association of Colleges and Universities in 1965 and is administered by the University of North Carolina General Administration. (See Table 1 for each SREB state's transfer committee.)

Core curriculum: Most SREB states have established a statewide core curriculum. The core curriculum includes freshman- and sophomore-level general education courses as well as a group of courses — generally taken in the sophomore year — that prepare students for study in their major fields. As a part of a statewide agreement, core curriculum courses generally transfer as a group from one public college to another, unless the student changes majors. In some states, courses from the core curriculum will transfer even if the student changes majors or does not complete the entire group of courses.

- Fourteen SREB states, all except Delaware and Virginia, have identified a core of freshman- and sophomore-level courses that will transfer readily as a group among public colleges. The total number of credit hours that will transfer within states ranges from 27 to 64. (See Appendix B for more information.)

Common course numbering systems: A common course number system ensures that comparable courses at public two- and four-year colleges across the state have common titles, numbers and descriptions. Students generally can transfer credits easily for these courses.

- Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia have implemented statewide common course numbering systems. Florida's system classifies all courses at public universities, community colleges, vocational-technical centers and selected non-public institutions. Georgia's system designates numbers for courses in its core curriculum. The North Carolina Community College System designates common course names, numbers, credit values and descriptions for 3,800 courses, including those in its core curriculum that will transfer among community colleges and University of North Carolina institutions. Texas developed a common course numbering system as a voluntary, cooperative effort to facilitate the transfer of freshman- and sophomore-level courses, and most of the state's public institutions participate. Virginia's community college system provides common course names, numbers, credit values and descriptions. All community colleges in the system use these designations and descriptors. (See Figure 1 on Page 4.)
- Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland and Oklahoma have course equivalency projects in place or under way. These efforts identify courses that are considered "equivalent" for transfer purposes at various institutions. Institutions assure students that if they take a course at one institution

considered equivalent to their course, they will be accepted upon transfer. Many of these systems are now Web-based, including Alabama’s STARS, Maryland’s ARTSYS and Oklahoma’s CEP.

Transfer guides: Transfer guides, which can be Web-based, inform students and advisers about the transferability of courses from one college or university to another and provide details about the remaining degree requirements after transfer credits are applied.

- Transfer guides are available in all SREB states. Institutional and statewide transfer guides typically outline transfer agreements and provide descriptions of admissions, transcript evaluation, orientation and advising processes for transfer students. States that make these guides available on the Web include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas and Virginia. (See Appendix C.)

Guarantees of Transfer: These are made to graduates of two-year colleges who transfer to four-year colleges. Students who complete associate of arts or associate of science degrees at two-year colleges are guaranteed to be classified as juniors when they transfer to a public four-year college in the state. They also are guaranteed that they will not be required to complete more credits for the bachelor’s degree than students who began their college studies at the four-year institution, if they continue in the same degree program.

- Many SREB states guarantee that students who earn an associate’s degree at a two-year college will receive from 60 to 64 hours of credit when they transfer to a four-year college in the state if they keep the same major. Many states also stipulate that students who earn associate’s degrees will be considered juniors at four-year colleges — or that they will be able to complete the bachelor’s degree in “sequential fashion.” These states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 1

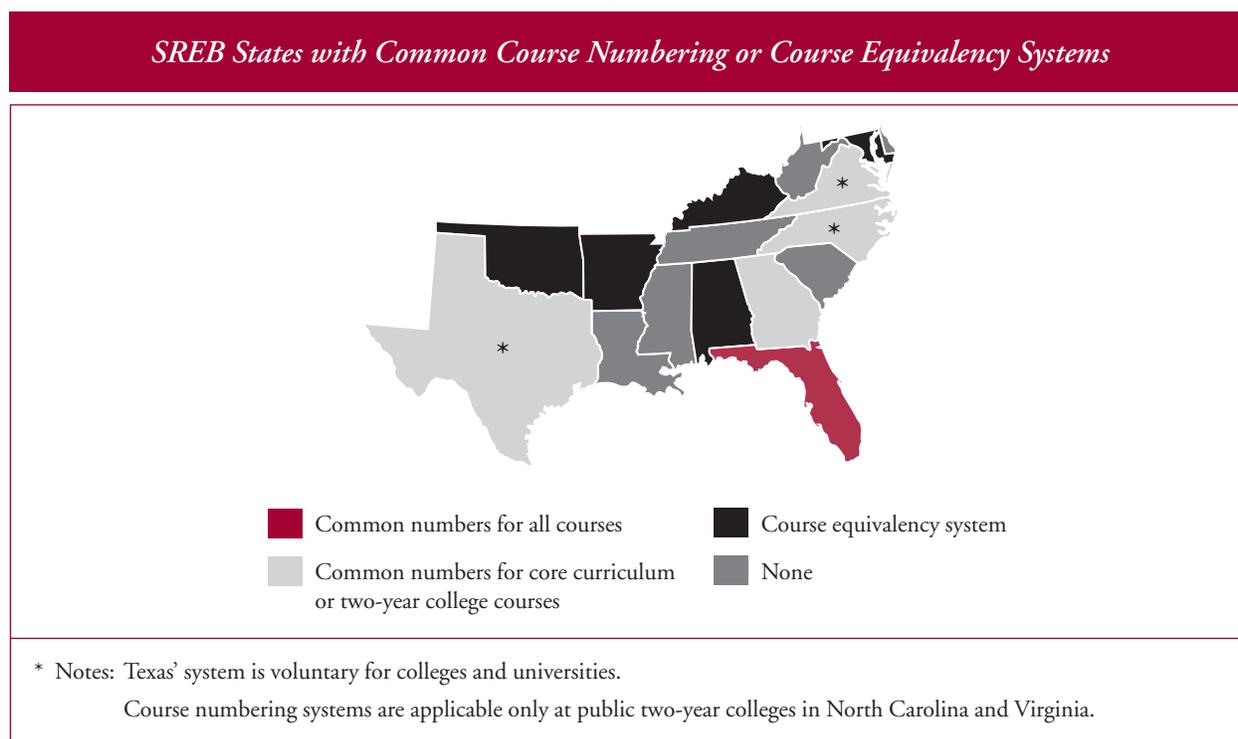


Table 1

State-Level Transfer Policies and Practices

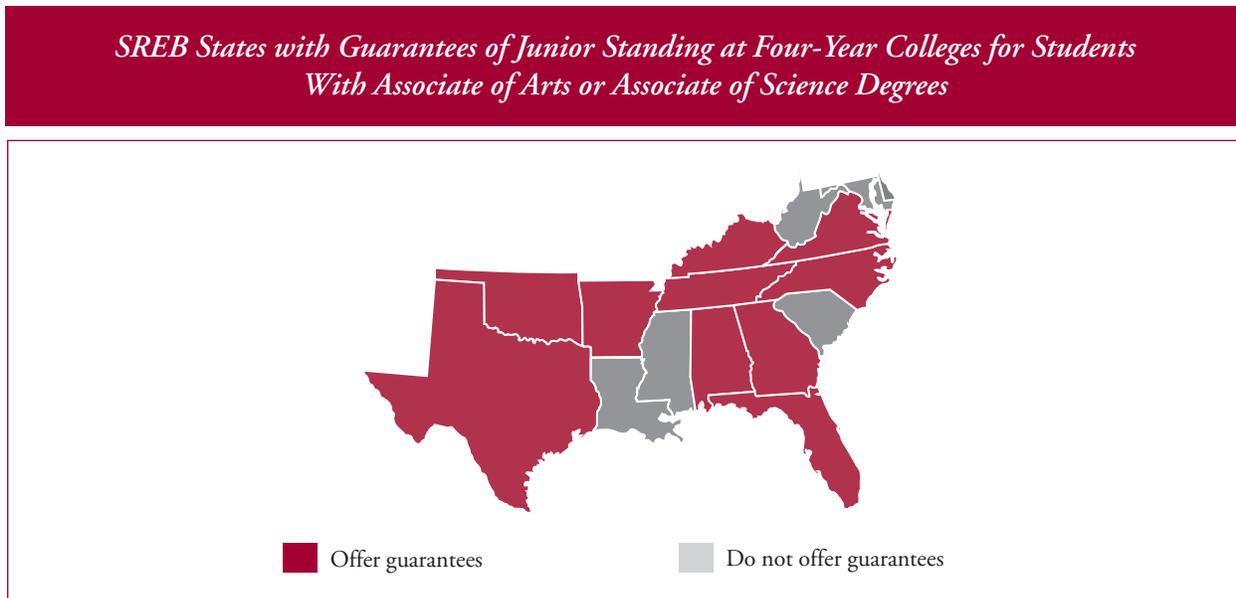
	Statewide Transfer Committee	Statewide Core Curriculum	Transfer Counselor Network	Web-Based Transfer Guide
Alabama	Articulation and General Studies Committee	*	*	*
Arkansas	Academic Affairs: Department of Higher Education	*	*	*
Delaware	None ¹		*	
Florida	Articulation Coordinating Committee: Office of the Commissioner of Education	*	*	*
Georgia	Council on General Education: University System of Georgia	*	*	
Kentucky	Statewide Transfer Committee: Kentucky Council of Postsecondary Education	*	*	*
Louisiana	Division of Academic and Student Affairs: Louisiana Board of Regents	*	*	*
Maryland	Student Transfer Advisory Council: Maryland Higher Education Commission	*	*	*
Mississippi	Articulation Committee: Institutions of Higher Learning; Board for Community and Junior Colleges	*	*	
North Carolina	Transfer Advisory Committee: University of North Carolina and North Carolina Community College systems	*	*	*
Oklahoma	Office for Academic Affairs ² : Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education	*	*	*
South Carolina	Transfer Articulation Policy Committee: Commission on Higher Education	*	*	
Tennessee	Articulation and Transfer Oversight Committee: Tennessee Higher Education Commission	*	*	
Texas	Undergraduate Education Unit: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board	*	*	*
Virginia	State Committee on Transfer: State Council of Higher Education for Virginia		*	*
West Virginia	Committee on Core Coursework: Higher Education Policy Commission, and the Council for Community and Technical College Education	*	*	

¹ Delaware has two four-year institutions and one two-year college. Each four-year college establishes its transfer policy.

² Oklahoma has transfer curriculum committees that are coordinated by the Office for Academic Affairs.

Sources: State higher education agencies, 2006.

Figure 2



- Mississippi outlines in its program-to-program transfer guides the credit hours that will transfer in each program area. Individual institutions may accept more — but not less — than the number of hours stipulated in the guides. Maryland stipulates that credits transferred from community colleges cannot exceed half the number required in the bachelor’s program and may not exceed 70 credit hours.

Transfer counselor networks: Transfer counselors at two- and four-year colleges and universities coordinate the transfer of credit and advise students as they enter and leave institutions.

- Every SREB state requires that its public colleges identify personnel to help students who plan to transfer to another college or university. The counselors help students identify courses that will meet degree requirements at the students’ “destination” colleges. Transfer counselor networks within state university systems also assist students with admissions, financial aid and enrollment. State system and campus advising offices generally have contact information — often also posted on Web sites — for transfer coordinators at all colleges.

Appeals procedures: Appeals procedures are available for students who question an institution’s evaluation and application of credits earned from other institutions and who request additional review.

- All SREB states have procedures to review student appeals of decisions about transfer of credit. If transfer-of-credit issues cannot be resolved at the institutional level, they are heard by the statewide governing or coordinating board, or a group authorized by it. For example, in Georgia, Tennessee and Texas, the higher education governing or coordinating board hears these appeals. In some other states, statewide transfer committees — for example, Florida’s Articulation Coordinating Committee, North Carolina’s Transfer Advisory Committee and Virginia’s State Committee on Transfer — hear the appeals.

Monitoring and auditing systems: These systems are necessary to review state and institutional compliance with policies and the effectiveness of transfer programs. States need uniform and consistent methods for reporting the number and percentage of students transferring between institutions, and they need systems to provide information on the academic performance and degree completion rates of transfer

students. A few states, notably Florida, Georgia and North Carolina, have statewide information systems that allow them to provide feedback on transfer student performance, including grades and graduation rates, after they transfer from one institution to another. Without such systems, tracking transfer movement is difficult.

Yet as many state and national studies of student mobility point out, transferring from a two-year college to a four-year college is only one of many transfer transactions states should monitor. Students at two-year colleges also may transfer to other two-year colleges, and students may transfer from one four-year college to another four-year or two-year college. Students at either type of school may attend classes at more than one institution simultaneously and may wish to accumulate all credits at one institution. About half of SREB states have statewide student-level record systems that enable them to monitor all of this transfer activity.

- A recent Lumina Foundation-funded report showed that 15 SREB states have developed student-level record systems to track student progress as they move through the education system. Nine SREB states currently include information in their system on credits earned and degrees awarded so they are able to monitor transfer activity and progress toward college degrees. These states are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia.

Faculty involvement: In addition to all of these common elements, states achieve the greatest success when faculty members representing all institutions affected by the agreements reach consensus about the credits related to course content and objectives. Often, faculty at institutions that receive many transfer students are reluctant to accept transfer credits if they believe the courses taught at other institutions are not equivalent to their own. But if faculty from both sending and receiving institutions focus on the *comparability* of courses, rather than their *equivalency*, they usually can reach consensus. That is, they can agree that one course can substitute for another, even when they cannot agree that the courses are generally the same. These agreements are substantially bolstered when faculty have evidence that students who have passed either course had comparable success in subsequent courses in the same or similar disciplines.

If faculty members from both sending and receiving institutions focus on comparability of courses rather than their equivalency, they can reach consensus.



SECOND QUESTION:

How does my state know whether students are able to make smooth transfers?

SREB states use a variety of methods to check the effectiveness of their transfer policies, including calculating and monitoring the state's transfer rate of students transferring from two- to four-year colleges, tracking the academic performance of transfer students, and determining how long it takes students to earn degrees — or as it is known, monitoring “time to degree.” Some states also are interested in excess credit hours, or the average number of credit hours it takes transfer students to earn degrees beyond the average for other students.

States that analyze transfer activity by following trends in the *transfer rate* first have to determine how they will calculate the rate. Some states calculate the rate as a percentage of students who transfer based on all the first-time, two-year college students at an institution. Others calculate the rate as a percentage of students who transfer, based on those students who complete 12 or more hours at a two-year college. Still other institutions track the transfer rate only of those who complete an associate's degree. The resulting rates range — not surprisingly — from 25 percent to 52 percent. Because states calculate the rates differently, it is not appropriate for states to compare their transfer rates with those of other states. Sharply differing rates could just as likely result from differences in the calculation method as from any differences in student mobility. The value of tracking these rates is in analyzing trends within your state over time.

One indicator states use to determine how well transfer policies are working is the transfer rate of students from two- to four-year institutions.

- Florida calculates the percentage of associate's degree graduates who enroll in Florida's four-year institutions in the same (or subsequent) year they earned the degree. In one recent year, 62 percent of associate's of arts degree recipients enrolled in four-year public or private colleges in the same or subsequent year.
- Maryland calculates the percentage of first-time, two-year college freshmen in the fall term who transfer to a Maryland public or private college within four years. In fall 2000, the rate was 25 percent.
- Oklahoma calculates the percentage of students who begin as degree-seeking freshmen in two-year colleges and transfer to four-year colleges within six years. The latest report shows a 35 percent transfer rate.
- Arkansas and Virginia also posted double-digit transfer rates for two-year college students. They are among several SREB states that participate in a study known as the Transfer Assembly Project, conducted by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges at the University of California, Los Angeles. Researchers in this study recently calculated transfer rates for Arkansas and Virginia based on their two-year college students who had completed at least 12 credit hours. In Arkansas, one in four had completed 12 or more credit hours and 38 percent of those students transferred to a four-year college. In Virginia, nearly half had completed at least 12 credit hours and 20 percent of those students transferred. Limiting the study to 12 credit hours means that in Arkansas, half as many students are tracked as in Virginia. This illustrates the importance of looking closely at the basis for your state's transfer rates to assess their effectiveness in meeting your state's goals.

Some SREB states track students' *academic performance* to assess the effectiveness of their transfer policies. Florida and North Carolina provide information to institutions, allowing them to review and evaluate programs of study, inform faculty of the strengths and weaknesses of student preparation, and provide statewide accountability.

Some SREB states track academic performance to help assess the effectiveness of their transfer policies.

- Two-year colleges in Florida report transfer patterns to four-year colleges. Four-year colleges report students' academic performance to the state. *The Florida Community College*

System Articulation Report summarizes the number of students transferring into the State University System and the distribution of cumulative grade-point averages earned by transfer students at the universities and systemwide.

- The University of North Carolina regularly monitors the academic performance of students who transfer into its institutions. It reports annually to two-year colleges on the performance of transfer students in English, mathematics, science and social science courses, and on students' overall academic standing.

Another important indicator of transfer policies' effectiveness is time to degree.

States also use students' *time to degree or excess credit hours* to monitor the effectiveness of transfer policies. A 2005 U.S. Department of Education study found that transferring from one college to another often increases the time it takes to complete a bachelor's degree and the number of credits students accumulate before earning the degree. This study reported that students who transferred from two-year to four-year colleges take about a year longer on average to earn a bachelor's degree than those who stayed at the same institution. Students transferring from a two-year college took about 5.4 years on average to earn a bachelor's degree, while those who transferred from four-year colleges to other four-year colleges took an average of 5.1 years; students who did not transfer took an average of 4.4 years to finish.

Research also shows, however, that factors other than transfer influence time to degree, including academic performance, the number of remedial courses students take, changes in major, the number of course withdrawals and failures, and more. Therefore, while time to degree is an important indicator of transfer policies' effectiveness, it is one of many.

Florida and North Carolina track the impact of college transfers on time to degree in somewhat different ways. The results, however, are similar: Transfer students fare less well than students who started and stayed at four-year colleges. Few states have studied the effect of transfer on the number of credit hours earned.

- The University of North Carolina (UNC) General Administration reports graduation rates for students with associate's degrees at community colleges and compares them with college juniors who began their studies as freshmen at one of the 16 UNC-affiliated campuses. The 2006 report showed that 69 percent of students with associate's degrees from a North Carolina community college graduated within four years of becoming juniors at a UNC institution. The graduation rate for the same time period for juniors who continued their studies at the same UNC institution was 89 percent.
- One of Florida's higher education accountability measures is the percentage of students who graduate with total credit hours equal to or less than 115 percent of the degree requirements. A 2006 report showed that 79 percent of students who transferred with an associate of arts degree completed four-year degrees within 115 percent of degree requirements. The rate for all students in the State University System was 67 percent. (The calculation for associate of arts students is based on credits earned in the junior and senior years only.)

SREB survey of state agencies: Transfer policy implementation

State higher education agencies in nearly all SREB states reported to SREB in fall 2006 that they had dealt with significantly fewer transfer-of-credit problems in recent years, compared with a decade earlier. They noted that fewer problems from students and parents are rising to the state level and that improvements in state policies mean most transfer issues are now resolved at the institutional level. When problems occur, it is generally because someone did not know or follow a policy.

They also reported that their states do not have comprehensive and systematic monitoring programs to assess the effectiveness of transfer policies. Many states do not have the information they need about the progress and performance of students who transfer, or about the impact of their initiatives. Most state officials indicated they did not know whether transfer students required more time to graduate or accumulated more credit hours before graduating than other students. But the officials believed that if students did, it was because they changed majors, had poor grades or poor counseling. They also pointed to the failure of institutions, at times, to comply with transfer agreements.

When asked what their states need to do to improve transfer, agency officials called for better monitoring of transfer policies, more effective communication, and common course numbering systems or easily accessible course equivalency tables (in states that do not have them already).

Emerging challenges facing SREB states: Two new transfer issues

Career and technical associate's and bachelor's degrees: Several states, including Florida and Georgia, have developed or are planning to develop bachelor's degrees in applied science and technology fields (B.A.S. and B.A.T. degrees) that build on applied associate's degrees (A.A.S. and (A.A.T.) at two-year colleges. These associate-level degrees originally were designed to lead directly into careers and not to bachelor's programs. The applied associate's degrees are different from the traditional associate's degrees, most critically in the general education component taken in the first two years. Many students and parents do not understand the differences in the various types of two- and four-year degrees, and communication is important. States should work through issues of transferability of credits for these different degrees, agree on what will transfer and communicate the decisions explicitly.

Credit from nationally accredited, specialized or for-profit institutions: In its 2006 report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings' Commission on the Future of Higher Education recommended that institutions be more flexible about transfer of credit, particularly credit earned at nationally accredited, generally for-profit and, often, specialized institutions. These institutions are distinct from regionally accredited, private and public, non-profit institutions. (Public colleges in SREB states are regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the North Central Association, or the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.) The commission report noted that nationally accredited institutions historically have been more career oriented than regionally accredited institutions, but it argued that many now have courses similar to those of traditional four-year colleges. Few regionally accredited institutions, however, routinely accept credit from these institutions. But policy-makers or education leaders in SREB states may be called upon to re-examine their transfer policies to make room for credit from these institutions. The challenge will be for states to ensure comparability of credit and clearly communicate to students the policies and procedures for review of credit and appeal of decisions.

What Can You and Your State Do to Ensure That Students Have Clear Paths From One College to Another?

SREB states have made progress in the last 10 years in developing statewide policies to ensure that more students are able to make smooth transfers from one institution to another. Advances in technology have improved communications about transfer policies. Some transfer guides now are online, and transfer networks can now be facilitated electronically. Yet SREB states do not have in place the systems they need to monitor their policies to ensure their effectiveness. SREB states can do more. Actions you as a policy-maker or education leader can take include the following.

1. Set the highest **goals** for the effectiveness of your state transfer system — goals that *maximize* the number of two-year college students transferring and completing a bachelor's degree and *minimize* the number of courses taken by transfer students that are not needed for the degree. Only by meeting these goals will state and student resources be spent most efficiently.
2. Set **statewide policies** that give transfer students similar total credit hours toward a bachelor's degree as students who begin at four-year institutions. Insist on performance measures that monitor the total hours accumulated in undergraduate education by both transfer and non-transfer students.
3. Ensure that all **key elements** of an effective transfer system are in place in your state. In particular:
 - Work toward development of a statewide system for transfer of your state's core curriculum — including sophomore-level courses that prepare students for their majors — among all public institutions, if your state does not already.
 - Put in place a statewide plan to monitor transfer rates, performance of transfer students, and other measures of effectiveness. Track statewide statistics so that you can follow trends.
 - Monitor the comparative number of credit hours taken in the junior and senior years by both transfer and non-transfer students. It does not serve the transfer student well for a senior university to accept course credits earned at a two-year college only to increase the number of credits required during the junior and senior years.
 - Evaluate the guarantees your state makes to transfer students regarding credits earned at two-year colleges and applied to four-year degrees.
 - Assess whether your state's transfer guide, Web site and counselor networks are providing adequate information to students and parents.
4. Call for a periodic **review** of your state's transfer policies to ensure they are effective.
5. Examine **issues** related to the transfer of credits from applied associate's degree programs and nationally accredited institutions.
6. Consider the kind of **comprehensive legislation** enacted by Florida in the mid-1990s. Florida has made great progress in making the paths to a baccalaureate degree clearer and easier for both transfer and non-transfer students.

Legislation and Regulation Related to Transfer in SREB States

In SREB states, the degree of specificity in state law and regulation governing transfer of credit varies. Both state law and regulation direct the systems of postsecondary education (or the coordinating and governing boards of two- and four-year institutions) and individual institutions to work together to provide clear paths for students who begin work at one public institution and wish to complete it at another.

- In **Florida**, the law is very comprehensive. It defines specific policies and procedures through legislation or administrative rule.
- In **North Carolina**, the law sets forth broad objectives under which the governing board establishes transfer policies and procedures.
- In **Georgia**, the Board of Regents establishes very specific statewide transfer policies.
- In **Virginia**, the higher education coordinating board issues guidelines for transfer based on good practice and encourages institutions to implement policies voluntarily that comply with the guidelines.

Elements of legislation found in two or more states include the following:

- Direct coordinating boards to work with two- and four-year colleges and universities to establish statewide articulation agreements or to establish transfer procedures and standards for articulation: **Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia** and **West Virginia**.
- Authorize university and community college governing boards to establish programs to maximize transfer of credits: **Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina** and **South Carolina**.
- Call for the development of a minimum core of general education/studies courses fully transferable and applicable toward general education/studies requirements at all public two- and four-year colleges: **Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana** and **Texas**.
- Call for development of a core transfer program (including, but not limited to general education credits) from two- to four-year colleges: **Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Texas** and **Virginia**.
- Specify that credits transferred from two- to four-year institutions should fulfill degree requirements at four-year institutions if they were earned at four-year institutions: **Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Oklahoma, Texas** and **West Virginia**.
- Specify that all lower-division academic courses offered by community colleges be transferable to all public four-year institutions or that students completing core or field of study curriculum at two-year colleges not be required to take additional core curriculum courses at four-year colleges: **Florida, Kentucky, Texas** and **West Virginia**.
- Establish common course numbering system: **Florida** and **North Carolina** (community college systems).

Appendix B

Transfer of Credit Hours

All SREB states except Delaware and Virginia have developed a core of freshman- and sophomore courses leading to the bachelor's degree that public four-year colleges and universities accept upon transfer. This core commonly has three components.

- General studies courses, including courses in the “area” of communications, humanities and fine arts; the “area” of mathematics, natural and physical sciences; the “area” of social and behavioral sciences; and the “area” of health and physical education.
- Courses that prepare students for their majors.
- General elective courses.

In most SREB states, the agreements that govern the transfer of the core curriculum allow institutions considerable freedom in designating which courses will be included in each of the components, but they specify the number of credits that students must complete. Some agreements stipulate that students must complete all the courses comprising an “area” of general studies, as these courses transfer together as a group in some states. The agreements in some states also include provisions for designating courses in the major fields.

Statewide Transfer Agreements in SREB States: Hours of Credit, 2006

	General Studies	Pre-Major and Electives	Total
Alabama	41	19 -23	60 - 64
Arkansas	46		46
Delaware ¹			
Florida	36	24	60
Georgia	42	18	60
Kentucky	33	27	60
Louisiana	27 ²		27
Maryland	30-36 ²		30-36
Mississippi ³	41	19	60
North Carolina	44	20	64
Oklahoma	37	23	60
South Carolina			33-60 ⁴
Tennessee	45-48	12-15	60
Texas	36	6	42
Virginia ¹	35		35
West Virginia	32		32

¹ Institutional agreements only.

² General studies credits are required for associate's degrees, are transferable and are applicable to bachelor's degrees.

³ The range in credit hours for the typical statewide program-to-program agreement. Actual varies by agreement.

⁴ Transfer modules in six areas as follows: arts, humanities and social sciences (46-48 semester hours); business administration (46-51 semester hours); engineering (33 semester hours); science and mathematics (51-53 semester hours); teacher education (38-39 semester hours); and nursing (60 semester hours).

Sources: State higher education agencies. Compiled by SREB staff, 2006.

Web-Based Postsecondary Transfer Guides in SREB States

Alabama: Statewide Transfer and Articulation Reporting System (STARS) —

<http://stars.troy.edu/agsc/agreement.htm>

STARS provides information on transfer frameworks for the state's bilateral agreements. Prospective transfer students gather information about the college they currently attend and the college(s) they wish to attend. The system provides an outline of the courses that comprise the first 60 to 64 semester hours of degree requirements for the chosen major at the college to which the student wishes to transfer.

Arkansas: Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS) —

<http://acts.adhe.edu/>

ACTS provides course information to facilitate student transfer within Arkansas public colleges. It contains comparable course information for many courses offered at public institutions in Arkansas. Comparable courses within ACTS are guaranteed to transfer for full credit to any Arkansas public institution.

Florida: FACTS.org —

www.facts.org
Students can access advising manuals, compare their current transcript with degree requirements and request degree audits to identify courses needed to complete a degree. Florida's *Counseling for Future Education Handbook* provides general information for transfer students, including the Transfer Student Bill of Rights, and is available on the Web.

Kentucky: Kentucky Course Applicability System (KY CAS) —

<http://cpe.ky.gov/policies/academicinit/Transfer>

Students and advisers can use KY CAS to determine which courses students should take and which courses will transfer to universities participating in the system. A transfer student handbook is also available online and in print.

Louisiana: Board of Regents Articulation System

Students can use the system to determine how general education courses transfer from one Louisiana institution to another.

Maryland: ARTSYS

A student can use the system to determine whether certain community college courses are transferable and the titles and numbers for courses at the four-year

college the student wishes to attend. It also lists recommended courses for transfer to specific majors at four-year institutions. Students can obtain a report on how the courses they have taken will fit into a single transfer program at one institution or for multiple programs at multiple institutions. Maryland's Higher Education Commission also provides a student guide in print and on its Web site.

North Carolina: College Transfer Guide for Students —

www.nccomunitycolleges.edu

Students can access online "Policies of Senior Colleges and Universities Concerning Transfer Students From Two-Year Colleges." Included are the comprehensive articulation agreements, including pre-major agreements, general education and elective course lists, and basic transfer policies.

Oklahoma: Course Equivalency Project (CEP)

Students, academic advisers and faculty can access course equivalencies within the Oklahoma higher education system. Students planning to transfer can find other institutions that will automatically accept credit for courses they have taken as equivalents to courses at the college students wish to attend.

Texas: College For Texans

www.collegefortexans.com

Students can access information on transferring credit, the Texas core curriculum, courses required in the field of study or major, the common course numbering system and planning for a transfer. They can pose questions to colleges about transferring and can access the online, searchable Texas Common Course Numbering System database.

Virginia

www.vccs.edu and www.schev.edu

The Web sites of the Virginia Community College System and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia publish transfer guides for all the public four-year colleges and universities in the state. The online tools identify clearly which courses will transfer from community colleges to four-year colleges and indicate whether more than 60 Community College System general education courses will transfer to four-year institutions as core requirements or as elective credits.

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Louisiana:

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See inside back cover for individual reports in the *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education report series.

Other Recent Challenge to Lead Reports

- *Improving ACT and SAT Scores: Making Progress, Facing Challenges*
This report looks at the underlying factors driving a state's college admission test scores, analyzes the most recent test results and makes recommendations for improvement.
- *High School to College and Careers: Aligning State Policies*
Programs and requirements for a student's transition from high school to college and career vary considerably among SREB states. This update to the 2005 and 2002 reports provides a one-page summary of each state's policies in these areas.
- *SREB States Lead the Nation in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Programs*
Participation in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs is growing in SREB states. This report addresses the continued momentum of SREB states in access to and achievement in these programs, especially for traditionally underserved student groups. It also offers suggestions for states interested in strengthening their programs.
- *Increasing Accountability for Teacher Preparation Programs*
This report reviews SREB states' progress in strengthening their accountability systems to ensure that their teacher preparation programs are producing quality teachers. The report identifies what SREB states are doing to respond to increased pressure for sound accountability systems and how states are ensuring that alternative programs are producing qualified teachers for schools.
- *Getting State Standards Right in the Early and Middle Grades*
Getting comprehensive state standards right and keeping them right may be the most important task facing public education today. This report recommends the use of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as a yardstick for state standards and includes state profiles of student performance on standards and NAEP assessments for each SREB state.
- *SREB States Take Action to Support Beginning Teachers*
This publication looks at SREB states' efforts to support and retain beginning teachers. Currently, all 16 SREB states offer some type of support for new teachers, with 10 of those states mandating such programs.
- *Focus on Teacher Pay and Incentives: Recent Legislative Actions and Update on Salary Averages*
Teacher pay continues to be a hot issue for states, particularly since it is likely the largest expenditure in education budgets. This paper summarizes the latest on average salaries, including an update on recent incentive pay programs, pilot projects and other legislative actions that affect the compensation of teachers.

Challenge to Lead Goals for Education

The reports listed below for each goal, and other reports on the goals, are found at www.sreb.org.

1. All children are ready for the first grade.
Building a Foundation for Success by Getting Every Child Ready for School
2. Achievement in the early grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
Mastering Reading and Mathematics in the Early Grades
3. Achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
Getting the Mission Right in the Middle Grades
4. All young adults have a high school diploma — or, if not, pass the GED tests.
Getting Serious About High School Graduation
5. All recent high school graduates have solid academic preparation and are ready for post-secondary education and a career.
Getting Students Ready for College and Careers
6. Adults who are not high school graduates participate in literacy and job-skills training and further education.
Investing Wisely in Adult Learning is Key to State Prosperity
7. The percentage of adults who earn postsecondary degrees or technical certificates exceeds national averages.
Creating College Opportunity for All: Prepared Students and Affordable Colleges
8. Every school has higher student performance and meets state academic standards for all students each year.
Focusing on Student Performance Through Accountability
9. Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal.
Progress Being Made in Getting a Quality Leader in Every School
10. Every student is taught by qualified teachers.
Resolve and Resources to Get a Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom
11. The quality of colleges and universities is regularly assessed and funding is targeted to quality, efficiency and state needs.
Holding Colleges and Universities Accountable for Meeting State Needs
12. The state places a high priority on an education system of schools, colleges and universities that is accountable.
From Goals to Results: Improving Education System Accountability

The Southern Regional Education Board has established these Goals for Education. They are built on the groundbreaking education goals SREB adopted in 1988 and on an ongoing effort to promote actions and measure progress. The goals raise further the sights of the 16 SREB states and challenge them to lead the nation.

