A Study Regarding the Feasibility of Implementing an Automatic Admission Policy for Transferring Undergraduate Students Who Meet Certain Qualifications

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board October 2006

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Executive Summary

Overview

Senate Bill 1227, Section 58, calls for the Coordinating Board to conduct a study examining the feasibility of implementing an automatic admission program for students who earn an associate degree or certificate from a two-year institution and who apply to transfer to a university. (A copy of Section 58 of SB 1227 is included in Appendix B.) Senate Bill 1227 requires that the feasibility study must be presented to "each legislative standing committee or subcommittee with jurisdiction over higher education" by October 1, 2006.

Study Methodology

To perform the study, Coordinating Board staff compiled data for five different types of awards: academic associate degrees, applied associate degrees, Level 1 Certificates, Level 2 Certificates, and Core Curriculum completion. Students who transferred with more than 30 SCH but without an award were also included in the study. In the data set of students who had done all their work at a community or technical college and had applied for admission to a university, the student groups were prioritized and separated.

Certain patterns emerged from the study:

- Students who apply for transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution within the public higher education system are generally accepted.
- Enrollment rates for students who apply and are accepted are high.
- Only a small fraction of the students who are eligible for transfer are actually taking advantage of that educational option.
- Students who transfer with more than 30 semester credit hours (SCH) from a community college or public technical college make up the largest group of transfer students in number.
- Students who have earned an academic associate degree apply and enroll at the highest rates.

This report includes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1. Any automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions which is proposed for statewide implementation should not include an automatic admission guarantee based solely on certificate program completion.

Recommendation 2. Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should include academic requirements in addition to completion of an associate degree from a Texas public community or technical college. These requirements should include:

- (a) completion of the 42-SCH core curriculum unless completion is precluded through provision in an existing field of study curriculum (e.g. music and engineering); and
- (b) achievement of a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

Recommendation 3. Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should exempt upper-level universities and health-related institutions.

Recommendation 4. Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should exempt any university that, with respect to the academic year for which an undergraduate transfer student has applied for admission, has filled through automatic admission as required by the other provisions of the law at least 50 percent of the spaces available for entering undergraduate students at the institution.

Recommendation 5. Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should complement existing articulation or specific admission agreements between institutions such as joint admission or other transfer articulation agreements.

Recommendation 6. To qualify for admission under a statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions, an applicant should be required to submit an application before the expiration of any application filing deadline established by the institution.

Recommendation 7: Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should not guarantee admission to a specific academic program within the institution. Admission to a particular program or school within a general academic teaching institution should be based solely on the requirements of the institution.

Recommendation 8: Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should apply to admission of students from Texas public institutions of higher education only.

A Study Regarding the Feasibility of Implementing an Automatic Admissions Policy for Transferring Undergraduate Students Who Meet Certain Qualifications

I. Introduction

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board holds as one of its fundamental responsibilities the development and implementation of "policies to provide for the free transferability of lower-division course credit among institutions of higher education" (Texas Education Code, Section 61.051(g)). Statutory requirements for a fully transferable general education core curriculum and discipline-specific transferable field of study curricula have encouraged institutions across the state to work together to promote and facilitate the transfer of qualified community and technical college students into four-year degree programs at Texas public universities.

The state's higher education plan, *Closing the Gaps by 2015*, has created an environment that naturally prompts continuous improvement of the cooperative enterprise of student transfer across institutions. With its four inter-related goals of increasing <u>participation</u> in higher education; fostering <u>success</u> for students in the achievement of their educational goals; cultivating <u>excellence</u> in degree programs, faculty endeavors, and student achievement; and increasing <u>research</u> funding and involvement at all levels of higher education, *Closing the Gaps* offers an unparalleled opportunity for Texas to increase student transfer rates and improve transfer patterns among the state's public colleges and universities.

The development and refinement of tools like the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual* (ACGM), the *Workforce Education Course Manual* (WECM), and the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS) have already helped clarify questions of quality and consistency among courses offered at public colleges and frequently presented in transfer to four-year institutions. The implementation of a transferable general education core curriculum and transferable discipline-specific field of study curricula, as well as participation by institutional representatives on the Coordinating Board's Transfer Success Advisory Committee and ACGM Advisory Committee, have offered statewide leadership and support for local transfer and articulation efforts.

Institutionally situated projects to increase the transfer of students from two-year to four-year institutions include such diverse initiatives as joint admission agreements between a college and a university, regional transfer and articulation councils, and the growing practice of reverse transfer. Local discussions may include the alignment of course content between two-year and four-year institutions. The Transfer Issues Advisory Committee completed a study in 2001 that presented a detailed look at transfer admission and persistence at six Texas universities, with the conclusion that

transfer policies and practices across the state provide for effective and successful student transfer.¹

While most students who want to transfer are able to do so, the goals of *Closing the Gaps* have inspired legislators, as well as those within the higher education community, to continue encouraging student participation, success, and excellence through the transfer of students from two-year associate degree-granting institutions into four-year baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

One example is a bill that was filed during the regular session of the 79th Texas Legislature (2005). House Bill 64 (HB 64) would have mandated the automatic admission of any student to four-year degree granting public universities if the student had successfully completed an associate-level degree or certificate program requiring completion of the general academic core curriculum (a minimum of 42 semester credit hours (SCH) of academic course work distributed in specific subject areas outlined by the Board, using courses approved by the Board and eligible for academic transfer to universities),² and was able to demonstrate a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. A student eligible for automatic admission would also have been required to complete all relevant application materials and submit them by the institution's stated deadlines.

Upper-level universities, whose entire undergraduate student body is made up of transfer students, would have been exempted from the proposed statute, as would any institution that had filled more than 50 percent of its space available for entering undergraduate students under other automatic admission provisions like the Top 10 Percent requirement.³

During the 79th Legislature's regular session, HB 64 did not become law. The complete text of HB 64 as it was passed by the House included in Appendix A.

Despite the failure of HB 64 to pass, interest in the potential for automatic admission of some students transferring from colleges to universities was sustained throughout the legislative session. Section 58 of Senate Bill 1227 (SB 1227) directed the Coordinating Board to conduct a feasibility study examining the feasibility of implementing an automatic admission program for students who earn a degree or certificate from a two-year institution and who apply to transfer to a university. The complete text of SB 1227, Section 58, is included in Appendix 2. The feasibility study including recommendations must be presented to "the legislative standing committee or subcommittee with jurisdiction over higher education" by October 1, 2006.

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¹ *Identifying and Closing the Gaps*, a study by the Transfer Issues Advisory Committee, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, June 2001.

² Completion of the core curriculum by a student seeking a bachelor's degree is required by law in order for a public university or health science center to award the degree to a candidate for graduation with a bachelor's degree; most academic associate degrees also require core completion, although there are a few exceptions (II. Definition of Terms below).

Texas Education Code, Section 51.803 (http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/ed.toc.htm)

II. Existing Transfer Practices in Texas and the U.S.

This feasibility study will provide information to the Texas Legislature as preparations get underway for the regular session of the 80th Texas Legislature, which will commence in January 2007. An initial consideration of existing transfer admission practices at Texas public universities, as well as transfer practices in other states, will provide a context for examining the feasibility of an automatic transfer admission program for students who earn an associate degree or certificate from a two-year institution prior to their transfer.

Three public universities in Texas grant automatic admission to any academic associate degree completer from a Texas public community college. Texas Woman's University offers "assured" admission to students who have earned an academic associate degree (AA or AS) at a Texas public community college and are in good academic standing at the previous institution/s.⁴ The University of Houston grants automatic admission to associate degree holders who completed the degree at a U.S. regionally-accredited institution.⁵ Angelo State University also offers automatic admission to academic associate degree holders.6

One increasingly popular cooperative arrangement is the joint or dual admission program, where a student applies and is admitted to a community college and a university at the same time. For example, a student may be admitted to Blinn College and to Sam Houston State University at the same time as part of a joint admission agreement entered into by both institutions. Once she has earned her associate degree she can make the transition to SHSU through a genuinely seamless experience, because she has already been admitted to SHSU, and has been able to enjoy privileges like access to SHSU's email service, library, tutoring/learning center, and other resources while completing her associate degree at Blinn College. Advising and career exploration are also generally similarly aligned in this kind of program through cooperative initiatives.

Such college-to-university partnerships are proliferating throughout Texas, as they are around the nation. Just as significant, only two other states – California and Florida – have statewide policies in place regarding admission of students who complete associate degrees or meet other academic requirements, and neither state grants full automatic admission to all associate degree or certificate holders statewide.

(University of Houston Undergraduate Catalogue 2005-2007, viewed at

TWU Undergraduate Catalogue, 2005-2007, p. 22.

http://www.uh.edu/academics/catalog/general/admis.html#aa on June 23, 2006)

Angelo State University's 2003-2005 Bulletin states: "A graduate from an accredited Texas public twoyear college with an associate degree will be admitted to Angelo State University without reservation once official transcripts have been received in the Office of Admissions."

See http://www.shsu.edu/joint/ (viewed on July 5, 2006). SHSU has also implemented a joint admission agreement with North Harris Montgomery Community College.

For that reason, this study may have significance beyond Texas. Although the same types of articulation agreements prevalent in Texas also exist in other states, across-the-board automatic admission policies for community college and technical institute students remain elusive.

California has different sets of policies governing transfer within the two university systems, the University of California System and the California State University System. Transfer eligibility criteria include completion of a certain number of credit hours and achievement of a minimum grade point average. But automatic admission on the basis of holding an associate degree or certificate is not part of any system-wide admission criteria.⁸

Florida has approved a legislatively mandated statewide articulation agreement that provides for associate in arts graduates who have met specific requirements to be admitted to the upper division of a state university, with certain exceptions.⁹ The statute does not include automatic admission for academic Associate in Science (AS) degrees or Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees.

These statewide and national findings position Texas near the forefront of debate about the advisability and feasibility of creating policies regarding statewide automatic admission for associate degree and certificate holders. Other states seem to have considered the option and rejected it for a more tailored articulation approach. But the burgeoning emphasis on accountability and institutional performance criteria, as well as the comprehensive strategic goals of *Closing the Gaps*, provide the impetus for a closer look at these issues now.

III. Definition of Terms

Definitions for the following terms were derived from the Texas Education Code; the Coordinating Board's Administrative Code (Coordinating Board rules); the glossary included in the *Guidelines for Instructional Programs in Workforce Education*, an official Coordinating Board document; and other similar sources. Instead of a bullet-point format, each term receives a more extended discussion, so that the reader will be able to proceed through the study with a sense of how the terms apply to certain institutions or student groups.

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⁸ Information collected during a telephone interview conducted on June 12, 2006 with Mr. Jeff Spano, Transfer and Articulation Coordinator of the California Community College Chancellor's Office (www.ccco.edu).

Florida Statutes, Title XLVII, §1007.23(2).

<u>Degree and Certificate Programs</u>

Academic associate degree (60 to 66 SCH)

An academic associate degree is a degree program leading to the Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), or Associate of Fine Arts (AFA) degree. An academic associate degree is designed and intended specifically for transfer to a four-year college or university, where a student can complete bachelor's degree requirements in the same discipline. Academic associate degree programs typically include the entire core curriculum offered by the college, and may also contain coursework in an appropriate Board-approved field of study curriculum. (Certain academic associate degrees with intensive course work in the discipline or field of study during the first two years (e.g. music, engineering, pre-med) do not require the completion of the entire general education core curriculum, because students following those degree plans at four-year universities typically do not complete the core curriculum in two years.)

Applied associate degree (60 to 72 SCH)

Applied associate degrees include both the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) and the Associate of Applied Arts (AAA) degrees. These degree programs are designed to lead the individual directly to employment in a specific career, and the technical specialty component of an AAS or AAA degree constitutes 50 percent to 75 percent of the course credits. There are generally 15 SCH of general academic coursework in an applied associate degree program, but students do not complete the entire academic core curriculum as part of the applied associate degree. Applied associate degree holders who transfer to aligned four-year degree programs must complete their core curriculum in addition to their AAS or AAA degrees, either through additional courses at the community college or after transfer to the university.

Certain applied associate degrees in professional areas like nursing, criminal justice, certain allied health professions, or engineering technology have established clearly aligned curricular pathways directly into four-year degree programs. These applied associate degrees frequently have a field of study curriculum approved through the Coordinating Board to facilitate student transfer into academic four-year degree programs.

Certificate programs

Certificate programs are workforce education programs offered at community and technical colleges. They are designed to develop skills appropriate for entry-level employment or for enhancing skills and knowledge within an occupation. Certificate programs may serve as stand-alone workforce development programs or as building blocks for applied associate degree programs. There are two kinds of certificate programs considered in this study: Level One Certificates (15 to 42 SCH) and Level Two Certificates (43 to 59 SCH).

The majority of credit earned in these two types of certificate programs will be through coursework in a technical specialty area. Academic courses that are designed to transfer into bachelor's degree programs are generally not part of certificate programs. While certificate programs may lead into an applied associate degree, it is unusual for a certificate student to transfer directly into a bachelor's degree program.

<u>Degree Components and Course-Related Terms</u>

Core curriculum (42 to 48 SCH)

From Texas Education Code, Section 61.821: "'Core curriculum' means the curriculum in liberal arts, humanities, and sciences and political, social, and cultural history that all undergraduate students of an institution of higher education are required to complete before receiving an academic undergraduate degree."

Core curriculum "completion" means completion of the Board-approved core curriculum of a community college, university, or health science center. Core curricula consist of academic coursework in a variety of disciplines that are fully transferable to any public institution.

By law, a core curriculum at a public college, university, or health science center in Texas must consist of a minimum of 42 SCH, and must be fully transferable. A completed core curriculum from one public college or university not only transfers to another, but by law must be substituted for the receiving institution's core curriculum, even if the two curricula are not entirely equivalent. Coordinating Board rules require institutions to indicate core curriculum completion as part of a student's official transcript.

Core curricula in public colleges and universities should be a component of the associate or bachelor's degrees that can be successfully completed exclusively with lower-division courses. In certain instances, universities are allowed to offer upper-division courses to fulfill core curriculum requirements, as long as the university also offers lower-division courses to fulfill the requirement. Core curriculum may also be referred to as "general education core curriculum," "general education requirements," "gen ed," or "basic courses."

<u>Field of study curriculum</u> (SCH variable by curriculum, usually 12-18 SCH)

From Texas Education Code, Section 61.821: "Field of study curriculum" means a set of courses that will satisfy the lower division requirements for a bachelor's degree in a specific academic area at a general academic teaching institution."

Field of study curricula (FOSC) do not vary from college to college. Developed with the assistance of advisory committees made up primarily of faculty from the specific discipline ("field of study") that will be affected, a FOSC must be approved by the Board and provides a statewide guarantee that those courses, if completed successfully, must

be accepted in transfer and applied to lower-division degree plan requirements even if the receiving institution's requirements are different. All the courses in a Boardapproved field of study curriculum must be lower-division courses.

The reference in the statute to a "general academic teaching institution" means any of the public universities that grant four-year degrees. Health science centers (HSCs) are not considered to be general academic teaching institutions and are exempted from applying FOSC credit directly to any particular degree plan. Students transferring to HSCs must meet the curricular requirements of the degree program at the HSC, but frequently, the courses in an appropriate FOSC will fulfill many if not all of those requirements.

Lower-division courses

Lower-division courses are those offered during the freshman and sophomore portion of a college student's educational experience (approximately the first 60 SCH of a bachelor's degree curriculum). These courses are all college-level, and are generally introductory or basic survey courses in a discipline or field of study. The *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual* (ACGM), the *Workforce Education Course Manual* (WECM), and the Texas Common Course Numbering System all concern courses offered at the lower division. Texas does not have a definition of "lower division" in statute or Coordinating Board rules, but the term is understood and used across the state by both public and private institutions.

Upper-division courses

Upper-division courses are those offered during the junior and senior portion of a college student's educational experience. These courses are more focused in content and include specific skills or knowledge that presumes a basic familiarity with the subject content acquired during the introductory or survey courses (lower-division courses). Texas does not have a definition of "upper division" in statute or Coordinating Board rules, but the term is understood and used across the state by both public and private institutions.

Receiving institution

The receiving institution is the college or university that accepts a student in transfer from another institution of higher education.

Sending institution

The sending institution is the college or university from which the student transfers into another institution of higher education.

Curricular Tools and Reference Documents

Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM)

The ACGM is the common course inventory, pre-approved by the Board, of lower-division academic courses taught regularly by community colleges. Community colleges must select their course listings each semester from these pre-approved courses. The ACGM includes brief course descriptions, identifying course numbers that may be used by colleges (and universities), limitations on the number of credit hours for each course, and other content and credit requirements. Most ACGM courses have a common course number assigned by the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS). Use of the ACGM helps assure consistency among the offerings of the community colleges. While universities offer many of the same courses, the course inventories of universities are unique to each institution and usually include a broader array of course offerings. Universities refer to the ACGM when evaluating incoming transfer student transcripts, but are not limited to offering only those courses included in the ACGM in the same way that community colleges are.¹⁰

The ACGM is routinely updated and maintained by Coordinating Board staff in cooperation with a standing advisory committee made up of equal numbers of two-year and four-year faculty and administrators. The advisory committee is co-chaired by a two-year and a four-year institutional representative.

Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS)

The TCCNS is a consortium of colleges and universities that includes membership from all the public and independent higher education institutions in Texas. The TCCNS functions as an independent entity with its own Board and by-laws, but maintains a close working relationship with the Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (TACRAO) and the Coordinating Board. The TCCNS provides a vehicle for the assignment of "common course numbers" to courses that have been determined to be equivalent at a number of Texas colleges and universities. All public community colleges in Texas employ TCCNS numbers for their course offerings, via the ACGM, and all public universities are required to identify in their institutional course listings any courses that they consider equivalent to a TCCNS course. There are more than 1,100 courses currently listed with common course numbers through TCCNS. TCCNS is commonly cited as the best statewide tool available for assuring consistency in course content, which facilitates credit transfer among member institutions and helps alleviate concerns regarding the quality of courses frequently transferred from two-year to four-year schools. (See www.tccns.org)

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¹⁰ Colleges may also request approval from the Coordinating Board to offer a course that is not generally available to all colleges through a process called "unique need." Unique need courses are approved for a single college and require advance assurance that the course would be accepted in transfer and applied to a degree at a minimum of two universities.

Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM)

The WECM is a web-based inventory of currently-approved workforce education courses available for use by community and technical colleges in Texas. An official Coordinating Board publication like the ACGM, the WECM is maintained and kept current by regular meetings of technical program faculty who make recommendations specific to a particular discipline or content area.

IV. Feasibility - What are the Factors?

An informal survey of institutional registrar and admissions personnel conducted during 2005 raised as a first issue the question of institutional capacity – what shifts in enrollment might reasonably be predicted as the effect of a mandate for automatic admission of students with associate degrees or certificates? Would such a mandate create undue population strain on high-enrollment universities?

Other questions include:

- 1. Is automatic admission of associate degree and certificate holders uniformly appropriate?
- 2. Would automatic admission overrule current admission standards for transfer students?
- 3. Would there be a potential effect on existing Top 10 Percent automatic admission laws for Texas high school graduates?
- 4. How would existing dual or joint admission agreements between individual institutions be affected?
- 5. Would an automatic admission requirement have a negative impact on students who fulfill curricular modules like the core curriculum or field of study curricula and then transfer without receiving an associate degree?

Feasibility factors considered in this study address these concerns. They include:

- 1. Institutional capacity
- 2. Current institutional transfer-related practices
- 3. Current patterns of transfer among potentially affected student groups
- 4. Appropriate academic requirements for automatic admission for potentially affected student groups

- 5. Appropriate limitations on automatic admission of potentially affected student groups, while considering other existing automatic admission requirements for universities
- 6. Desirable changes in current practices and patterns related to achieving the goals of *Closing the Gaps*

V. Data and Interpretation: Feasibility Factors Quantified

Many of the feasibility factors enumerated above can be addressed by examining enrollment and graduation data from community colleges and technical schools, transfer rates, and transfer student success. The body of data used in this study was reported directly to the Coordinating Board from the individual colleges and universities as part of the routine annual reporting cycle. Once the Coordinating Board's Higher Education Data Center has certified the data as accurate, it can be released and used in studies like the current one.

Data was compiled from the five academic years beginning with 2000-01 and extending through 2004-05 (the last academic year for which data collection and certification was complete at the time of this study). Information representing community and technical college students was the focus of the study, and was linked with admission and enrollment information from universities regarding those same students after their transfer.

Board staff compiled data for five different types of awards: academic associate degrees, applied associate degrees, Level 1 Certificates, Level 2 Certificates, and core curriculum completion (regardless of associate degree completion). Students who transferred with more than 30 SCH but without an award (a degree or certificate) were also included in the study. In the sorting of data for students who had done all their work at a community or technical college and had applied for admission to a university, the student groups were prioritized and separated. Students who had been awarded an academic associate degree or an applied associate degree were identified first. Then, students who had completed the core curriculum but had not received a degree were sorted. Finally, those students who had completed more than 30 SCH but who had neither received a degree nor completed the core curriculum requirements were sorted. Certificate 1 and 2 holders made up the remaining two groups under consideration.

For each of these awards in the academic years 2000-01 through 2004-05, staff determined the number of students who earned such an award during the previous academic year; the number of those students who applied to general academic teaching institutions; the number of these students admitted; and the number of those students who enrolled. Staff also examined grade point averages (GPAs) of the students who applied to four-year institutions and how GPA affected acceptance and enrollment rates.

The body of data considered for this study represents students who applied for transfer immediately after receiving their degree or certificate, or after the year during which they completed the core curriculum. The students in the sample represent the primary target group for the proposed legislation – students who would transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution without interrupting their enrollment by dropping out or stopping out.

Although these data sets represent students who attend public community colleges, they do not present a complete picture of transfer in Texas. Some students wait for a period of time after completing the associate degree, but then apply to a university. Students applying for admission with those awards after a longer time period were not included in the study. Other students apply to and enroll at private or out-of-state universities. They figure into the initial total number of students eligible for transfer in each category, but only students who applied to and enrolled at Texas public universities were included in those data sets. For purposes of this feasibility study, the data presents a comprehensive survey of potentially affected student groups who are eligible for immediate transfer in any of the groups examined.

Tables 1 – 6 show the number of students who applied for admission having completed either an academic associate degree, an applied associate degree, a Level 1 Certificate, a Level 2 Certificate, the academic 42-SCH core curriculum (without earning an academic associate degree), or more than 30 SCH without receiving any award or the 42-SCH core curriculum. The following tables demonstrate relationships among the total number of students in Texas community colleges who received an award, applied, were accepted, and enrolled in a Texas public university. These numbers represent all students regardless of GPA.

For the following tables, the "Degrees Awarded," "Certificates Awarded," "Core Complete," or "≥ 30 SCH" columns reflect the number of degrees awarded in the previous academic year, indicating students who had recently received the award. The figures for students who applied, were accepted, and enrolled reflect tracking of the same cohort through the next academic year. The "Applied" columns show first the number of applicants (unduplicated) and then, in parentheses, the number of total applications. The second number (in parentheses) is often larger than the actual number of applicants because some students applied to more than one institution and may have been accepted by more than one institution.

Table 1. Academic Associate Degrees CTC → UNIV¹¹

Academic Year	Degrees Awarded	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	11,729	2,948 (3,410)	3,146	2,351
2001-02	11,727	3,094 (3,622)	3,415	2,531
2002-03	13,882	3,686 (4,267)	4,013	2,935
2003-04	15,763	3,992 (4,597)	4,328	3,116
2004-05	17,784	4,651 (5,388)	5,100	3,643

Table 2. Applied Associate Degrees CTC → UNIV

Academic Year	Degrees Awarded	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	12,857	524 (556)	511	341
2001-02	12,546	555 (600)	560	363
2002-03	12,513	624 (681)	637	408
2003-04	13,426	644 (694)	644	413
2004-05	14,438	697 (749)	707	443

Table 3. Certificate 1 CTC → UNIV

Academic Year	Total Level 1 Certificates Awarded	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	13,002	94 (98)	86	55
2001-02	13,479	103 (110)	96	57
2002-03	15,688	112 (118)	105	70
2003-04	17,826	120 (125)	109	67
2004-05	18,476	125 (129)	114	75

Table 4. Certificate 2 CTC → UNIV

Academic Year	Total Level 2 Certificates Awarded	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	2,388	8 (8)	8	4
2001-02	1,944	11 (11)	10	5
2002-03	1,728	10 (10)	7	2
2003-04	1,944	10 (14)	12	2
2004-05	2,092	9 (9)	8	5

 $^{^{11}}$ The "Applied" columns show first the number of applicants (unduplicated) and then, in parentheses, the number of total applications.

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Table 5. 42-SCH Core Curriculum Complete CTC → UNIV¹²

(Core curriculum completion information was not collected by THECB until the 2001-02 reporting period.)

Academic Year	Total Core Complete	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	NA	NA	NA	NA
2001-02	4,380	311 (355)	337	260
2002-03	7,363	586 (669)	628	462
2003-04	11,818	900 (1,030)	976	711
2004-05	13,400	903 (1,031)	958	714

Table 6. \geq 30 Semester Credit Hours (No degree or certificate) CTC \rightarrow UNIV

The second column here, Total \geq 30 SCH (No Award), represents all students enrolled at a community or technical college who had accumulated at least 30 SCH from a community or technical college during the previous six years.

Academic Year	Total ≥ 30 SCH (No Award)	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	424,038	17,438 (19,837)	16,397	12,336
2001-02	433,961	18,600 (21,380)	18,211	13,110
2002-03	448,148	18,701 (21,173)	18,308	12,948
2003-04	466,252	18,832 (21,299)	18,576	12,858
2004-05	491,439	20,031 (22,474)	19,723	13,560

Charts 1 - 6 (on the following three pages) show essentially the same information as Tables 1 - 6, but present it in a different format. The charts offer a graphic representation of the total number of students potentially eligible to transfer and the number of students from the group who applied for admission having completed either an academic associate degree, an applied associate degree, a Level 1 Certificate, a Level 2 Certificate, the 42-SCH academic core curriculum (without earning an academic associate degree), or applied for transfer having earned more than 30 SCH but receiving no other award and without having completed the academic core curriculum.

These charts show the total number of awards (degree or certificate) for the academic year prior to transfer, the number of students with the award who applied for admission to a university, the number of applications documented (usually larger than the number of applicants, because some students apply to more than one institution), the number of acceptances, and the number of students who enrolled. As with the first six tables, GPA is not a factor in these first, more comprehensive charts.

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¹² The "Applied" columns show first the number of applicants (unduplicated) and then, in parentheses, the number of total applications.

Chart 1. Academic Associate Degrees CTC → UNIV 2000-01 through 2004-05

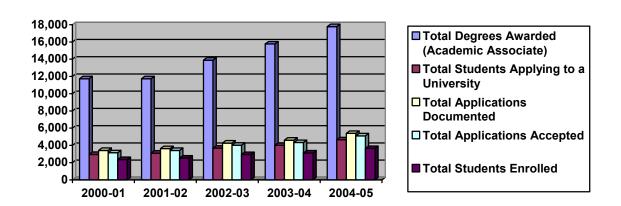


Chart 2. Technical Associate Degrees CTC → UNIV 2000-01 through 2004-05

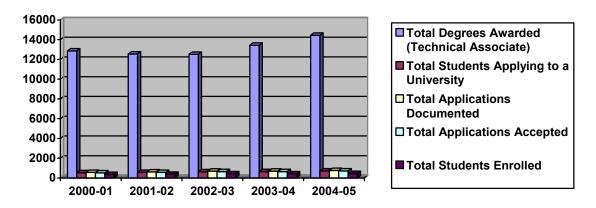


Chart 3. Certificate 1 Awards CTC → UNIV 2000-01 through 2004-05

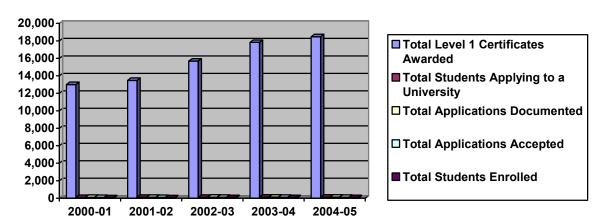


Chart 4. Certificate 2 Awards CTC → UNIV 2000-01 through 2004-05

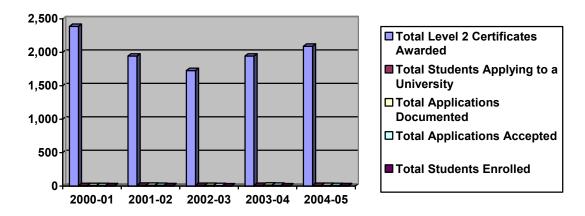


Chart 5. 42-SCH Core Curriculum Completed (No Degree Awarded) CTC → UNIV 2000-01 through 2004-05

(Core curriculum completion information was not collected by THECB until the 2001-02 reporting period.)

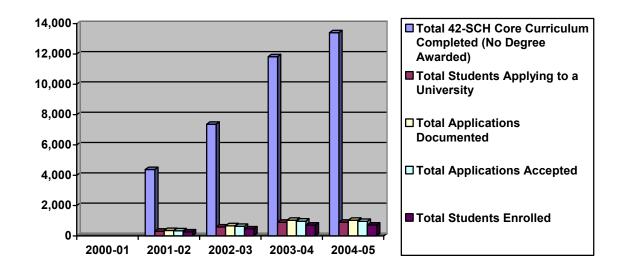
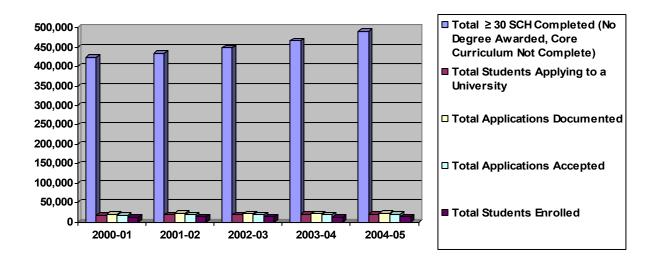


Chart 6. ≥ 30 SCH Completed (No Degree Awarded, Core Curriculum Not Complete)

CTC → UNIV 2000-01 through 2004-05



Using the same information to determine the percentage of eligible students who take advantage of the transfer option allows further insight into the statewide transfer picture, at least for the public community college to public university pathway. Tables 7 through 12 show the percentages of those students who applied, were accepted, and enrolled in a university the following academic year. The percentage of students who applied and who were accepted routinely exceeds 100 percent because some students applied to more than one institution and received more than one acceptance.

Table 7. Academic Associate Degrees CTC → UNIV Percentages

Academic Year	Degrees	Percent Who	Percent of Applied Who	Percent of Applied Who
Academie Teal	Awarded	Applied	Were Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	11,800	25%	107%	80%
2001-02	11,959	26%	110%	81%
2002-03	14,148	27%	109%	80%
2003-04	16,122	25%	108%	78%
2004-05	18,231	26%	110%	78%

Table 8. Technical Associate Degrees CTC → UNIV Percentages

			Percent of	Percent of
Academic Year	Degrees	Percent Who	Applied Who	Applied Who
	Awarded	Applied	Were Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	12,587	4%	98%	65%
2001-02	12,546	4%	101%	65%
2002-03	12,513	5%	102%	65%
2003-04	13,426	5%	100%	64%
2004-05	14,438	5%	101%	64%

Table 9. Certificate 1 Awards CTC → UNIV Percentages

Academic Year	Total Level 1 Certificates Awarded	Percent Who Applied	Percent of Applied Who Were Accepted	Percent of Applied Who Enrolled
2000-01	13,002	0.7%	92%	59%
2001-02	13,479	0.8%	93%	55%
2002-03	15,688	0.7%	94%	63%
2003-04	17,826	0.7%	91%	56%
2004-05	18,476	0.7%	91%	60%

Table 10. Certificate 2 Awards CTC → UNIV Percentages

Academic Year	Total Level 2 Certificates Awarded	Percent Who Applied	Percent of Applied Who Were Accepted	Percent of Applied Who Enrolled
2000-01	2,388	0.3%	100%	50%
2001-02	1,944	0.6%	91%	46%
2002-03	1,728	0.6%	70%	20%
2003-04	1,944	0.5%	120%	20%
2004-05	2,092	0.4%	89%	56%

Table 11. Core Curriculum Complete (No Other Award) CTC → UNIV Percentages (Core curriculum completion information was not collected by THECB until the 2001-02 reporting period.)

			Percent of	Percent of
Academic Year	Total Core	Percent Who	Applied Who	Applied Who
	Complete	Applied	Were Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	NA	N/A	N/A	N/A
2001-02	4,380	7%	108%	84%
2002-03	7,363	8%	107%	79%
2003-04	11,818	8%	108%	79%
2004-05	13,400	7%	106%	79%

Table 12. \geq 30 SCH (No Other Award) CTC \rightarrow UNIV Percentages (This table is based on the number of students in the category who applied for transfer to a university.)

			Percent of	Percent of
Academic Year	Total ≥ 30 SCH	Percent Who	Applied Who	Applied Who
	(No Award)	Applied	Were Accepted	Enrolled
2000-01	424,038	4%	94%	71%
2001-02	433,961	4%	98%	71%
2002-03	448,148	4%	98%	69%
2003-04	466,252	4%	99%	68%
2004-05	491,439	4%	99%	68%

Even without reference to the grade point averages of students seeking transfer in these six categories, certain conclusions become evident. One interesting and consistent finding concerns the difference between associate degree and certificate programs.

Certificate programs are not designed or intended to be used as a direct route into a bachelor's degree program. Some certificate programs can contribute to an associate of applied science program, but more often a certificate is designed and intended to establish or enhance workplace credentials or skills. In general, students in certificate programs are not required to enroll in transferable academic courses, so students who complete these comparatively short programs come away from them

without any basis through the certificate program itself for moving directly into a fouryear institution (although students may complete a certificate program and then apply to a four-year institution on the basis of other coursework they have completed, high school achievement, etc.).

The small number of students who apply directly to bachelor's-level institutions from a certificate program underscores two points. First, certificate programs at Texas public community colleges and technical schools are fulfilling their intended functions well, as attested by the number of awards per year. Second, counseling and advising is effective in helping students understand the intent and scope of the certificate program, what completion of a certificate program can offer a student, etc. Certificate programs are not being inappropriately used as a direct route into baccalaureate programs.

These conclusions lead to a recommendation that any automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions that is proposed for statewide implementation should not include an automatic admission guarantee based solely on certificate program completion.

Other evidence from the data leads to conclusive findings even prior to consideration of GPA as a factor in transfer student application, acceptance, and enrollments patterns. Some of the most significant preliminary findings include these points:

- (1) <u>Students who apply to a four-year institution with any of these awards are very likely to be accepted</u>. In fact, because the number of applications is so frequently larger than the actual number of students seeking admission to the four-year institutions (some students apply to more than one institution), acceptance rates routinely exceed 100 percent of the actual number of students seeking admission.
- (2) The number and percentage of students from each category who apply to a four-year public university is low. In each of the relevant categories, there is a much larger pool of potential transfer students who are not, for whatever reason, choosing to attempt transfer to a public four-year institution during the year they achieve their award.

For example, only about one-fourth of students who earn an academic associate degree (the two-year award actually designed as a transfer vehicle) apply to a public university directly after they earn the award. Only about four percent of all students who completed at least 30 semester credit hours at a college or technical institute during the previous six years (without completing a degree or the core curriculum) apply to a university in any given year.

Academic associate degree holders make up the only group in the study with an application rate to universities that exceeds 10 percent. Although the largest group of transfer students identified in this study is the group of students

who have completed at least 30 SCH without earning a degree or completing the core curriculum, academic associate degree completers have the highest percentage of transfer.

- (3) Of students who apply and are accepted, the rate of enrollment is high. For students with academic associate degrees, for example, about four of every five students who apply to a four-year institution after receiving the associate degree enroll at a university the following academic year. Like associate degree holders, students who have completed the 42-SCH core curriculum and apply for transfer have acceptance rates topping 100 percent if acceptances by multiple institutions are taken into account. They also have enrollment rates that are slightly better than those for the academic associate degree holders. These application and enrollment rates indicate that the public universities are a popular and competitive option for students, considering that a certain additional number of the total eligible students in a category group will apply to and attend independent, proprietary, or out-of-state institutions.
- (4) The percentages of students in each group who apply, are accepted, and enroll are consistent for each group throughout the five-year period under consideration.
- (5) For all categories considered, the vast majority of students who apply to transfer into a four-year institution are accepted and once accepted, they enroll at relatively high rates. Students who complete an associate degree or the 42-SCH core curriculum, or even more than 30 SCH of work at a community college or technical school, are very likely to be successful in their application to a four-year institution. This means that those students who choose to apply are already experiencing a result very close to what would experience under an automatic admission policy.

Despite the fact that students who apply are likely to be admitted, the number of eligible students who chose to apply is unacceptably low. Further study might determine factors to account for the low application rates. A large number of students who are eligible for transfer do not apply to or enroll at public universities.

This unfortunate trend seems to mirror the issues currently being addressed in public schools to encourage students to attend college. Perhaps there is need for an extension of this campaign to encourage community college students to transfer to four-year degree programs when it is appropriate to do so. But because the potential pool of students eligible to transfer to a university is so large, any policies establishing automatic admission for this group would need to take into account the potential for enrollment management conflicts that could arise due to existing requirements such as the Top 10 Percent law for high school graduates.

Sorting the same award completion, application, and enrollment information by student GPA shows patterns similar to those noted for all students regardless of GPA.

Specifically, rather than the data indicating that those students with the highest GPAs achieved transfer acceptance at higher rates or in larger numbers, students with all GPAs, even those below the traditional 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, were able to apply, gain admission to, and enroll in baccalaureate degree programs at universities. Students with GPAs between 2.0 and 2.9 who were accepted to four-year schools sometimes enrolled at slightly higher rates than students with GPAs between 3.0 and 4.0. Students with GPAs below 2.0 were sometimes accepted, and although some of those students did enroll, the numbers and percentages of those who enrolled once they had been accepted were lower than for students with GPAs above 2.0 at the point of admission.

Tables 13 – 16 show the distribution of students in each of the award categories studied according to GPA presented upon application (certificate holders have been omitted from this part of the data analysis due to the very small numbers of those students who transfer).

Table 13. Academic Associate Degree Holders GPA Comparison

			<u> </u>		
2004-05	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	62	55	38	61%
	< 2.0	142	131	93	65%
	2.0 – 2.9	1,919	1,820	1,353	70%
	3.0 - 4.0	3,265	3,094	2,159	66%
2003-04	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	96	85	64	67%
	< 2.0	130	113	89	68%
	2.0 - 2.9	1,573	1,467	1,072	68%
	3.0 - 4.0	2,798	2663	1,891	68%
2002-03	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	101	98	68	67%
	< 2.0	127	111	80	63%
	2.0 - 2.9	1,919	1,384	1,035	54%
	3.0 - 4.0	2,560	2,420	1,752	68%
2001-02	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	265	255	187	70%
	< 2.0	107	96	81	76%
	2.0 - 2.9	1,191	1,114	858	72%
	3.0 - 4.0	2,059	1,950	1,405	68%
2000-01	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	338	319	222	66%
	< 2.0	116	97	74	64%
	2.0 - 2.9	1,139	1,021	788	69%
	3.0 - 4.0	1,817	1,709	1,267	70%

Table 14. Technical Associate Degrees GPA Comparison

2004-05	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	10	10	4	40%
	< 2.0	14	13	6	43%
	2.0 – 2.9	232	217	149	64%
	3.0 - 4.0	493	467	284	58%
2003-04	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	22	19	9	41%
	< 2.0	19	18	11	58%
	2.0 – 2.9	225	214	150	67%
	3.0 - 4.0	428	393	243	57%
2002-03	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	37	32	18	49%
	< 2.0	13	11	6	46%
	2.0 - 2.9	212	198	130	61%
	3.0 - 4.0	419	396	254	61%
2001-02	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	77	73	40	52%
	< 2.0	14	13	10	71%
	2.0 – 2.9	178	168	115	65%
	3.0 - 4.0	331	306	198	60%
2000-01	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	99	94	57	58%
	< 2.0	12	12	9	75%
	2.0 – 2.9	178	163	107	60%
	3.0 - 4.0	267	242	168	63%

Table 15. Core Curriculum Completers GPA Comparison (Core curriculum completion information was not collected by THECB until the 2001-02 reporting period.)

2004-05	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	8	7	5	63%
	< 2.0	23	19	16	70%
	2.0 - 2.9	408	386	311	76%
	3.0 - 4.0	592	546	382	65%
2003-04	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	6	6	4	67%
	< 2.0	26	20	17	65%
	2.0 - 2.9	473	452	339	72%
	3.0 - 4.0	525	498	351	67%
2002-03	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	6	5	5	83%
	< 2.0	29	24	21	72%
	2.0 - 2.9	285	266	194	68%
	3.0 - 4.0	349	333	242	69%
2001-02	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied who Enrolled
	Unknown	11	9	6	55%
	< 2.0	7	5	4	57%
	2.0 – 2.9	140	135	104	74%
	3.0 - 4.0	197	188	146	74%

Table 16. ≥ 30 SCH Completers (No Award) GPA Comparison

2004-05	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied
	3. 7.				who Enrolled
	Unknown	169	154	90	53%
	< 2.0	1,889	1,276	895	47%
	2.0 - 2.9	10,452	9,306	6,563	63%
	3.0 - 4.0	9,964	8,987	6,012	60%
2003-04	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied
					who Enrolled
	Unknown	342	316	184	54%
	< 2.0	1,935	1,352	937	48%
	2.0 - 2.9	9,816	8,633	6,161	63%
	3.0 - 4.0	9,206	8,275	5,576	61%
2002-03	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied
					who Enrolled
	Unknown	447	398	235	53%
	< 2.0	2,037	1,329	960	47%
	2.0 - 2.9	9,556	8,300	5,982	63%
	3.0 - 4.0	9,133	8,281	5,771	63%
2001-02	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied
					who Enrolled
	Unknown	871	786	507	58%
	< 2.0	2,139	1,431	1,067	50%
	2.0 - 2.9	9,705	8,280	6,088	63%
	3.0 - 4.0	8665	7,714	5,448	63%
	a				
2000-01	GPA	Total Applied	Total Accepted	Total Enrolled	Percent Applied
					who Enrolled
	Unknown	1,061	940	632	60%
	< 2.0	2,027	1,261	949	47%
	2.0 – 2.9	9,143	7,531	5,762	63%
	3.0 - 4.0	7,606	6,665	4,993	66%

Based on the findings for the five years under consideration, which group(s) of students are most likely to apply, be accepted, and actually enroll? When Tables 13-16 are compared with the more general findings exhibited in Tables 1-6 and 7-12, the groups of students who consistently take advantage of transfer opportunities in the greatest numbers become more evident, as noted below:

The number of transfer students statewide is substantial, yet fewer than one-fourth of students eligible to do so are engaging in the transfer process. In no case does there appear a clear pattern of students being accepted or enrolling in significantly larger numbers due solely to grade point average at the time of application for transfer. The most significant concern with the numbers

themselves is that they are so low compared to the available student application pool.

- In terms of sheer numbers, the students with more than 30 SCH but no degree or core curriculum completion make up the largest group of students who apply to transfer, and they are also the largest number of students actually accepted. They tend to enroll at rates slightly below academic associate degree holders and core curriculum completers, but at rates similar to those who have completed an applied associate degree prior to transfer.
- Certificate holders, considered as a group without breaking out Certificate 1 and Certificate 2 sub-groups, are the second highest in number, but their application and transfer rates are so low as to be statistically and practically insignificant.
- Academic associate degree holders are the most like group to apply and then enroll at a university. Academic associate degree completers are the third largest group in terms of sheer population. The number of students with AA or AS degrees transferring to a university has increased during the five years for which data was examined.
- The applied associate degree holders who apply to transfer are a much smaller group, but for those students who apply, enrollment rates have remained steady at about 65 percent of those who applied.
- For academic associate degree completers and core curriculum completers, and for students who transfer with more than 30 SCH but no other award, the percentages of students who are accepted and who enroll at universities as transfer students does not vary much depending on GPA. Students with GPAs between 2.0 and 2.9 tend to enroll at slightly higher rates than those students who transfer with a GPA between 3.0 and 4.0.
- Applied associate degree holders who apply for transfer, although their overall numbers are lower, demonstrate a profile similar to that of the academic associate degree completers. Students with GPAs between 2.0 and 2.9 enroll at slightly higher levels than those with GPAs upon admission of 3.0 and 4.0.
- In summary, the transfer students with GPAs between 3.0 and 4.0 tend to enroll
 in universities at slightly lower rates across the board. Without further research, it
 is difficult to suggest a reason for this slight decline in enrollment among the
 students with the highest grades upon admission. Another area for further
 research would be in the persistence and graduation rates of students in these
 groups.

These findings suggest a potential shift in focus regarding the feasibility of a comprehensive automatic admission program for associate degree holders and others who meet specific academic requirements. A properly-modulated automatic admission

policy for continuing undergraduate students could affirm and supplement existing practices that are providing a successful pathway through baccalaureate education for students who choose to pursue it. Setting a standard for automatic admission based on a requirement of academic achievement beyond the routine eligibility requirements for transfer admission could enhance what appears to be a well-functioning transfer system, and could encourage an increase in the rate of transfer student application and enrollment.

Raising the bar for automatic admission beyond the minimum requirements for acceptance through transfer could produce an increase in student achievement as well as enrollment. In terms of increasing applications and enrollment yield, encouraging persistence, and cultivating excellence as a worthwhile goal for undergraduate students at every level, such a focus would be appropriate in conjunction with the goals of *Closing the Gaps*.

The automatic admission program for top-performing high schools students (Top 10 Percent Law) has been promoted as an incentive for students to take their secondary school college preparation seriously. An automatic admission program encouraging undergraduates to continue from two-year to four-year institutions could be designed to offer a similar incentive through the imposition of conditions such as successful completion of the 42-SCH core curriculum or achievement of a high GPA. Another consideration would be to connect a GPA requirement for an automatic admission program and certain financial aid loan programs that require a B average (3.0 GPA) to maintain the award as a grant rather than a loan, or to qualify for the financial aid.

Including additional academic qualifications designed to encourage excellence and high achievement among community college students could partially address potential enrollment management and capacity issues at universities. Coupled with other provisions like those included in HB 64 designed to protect institutions already overwhelmed by other automatic admission requirements, this shift of focus would allow for more deliberate managed growth in enrollments while stimulating a controlled increase in applications from students in the target groups.

VI. Recommendations

These considerations lead to a series of recommendations regarding the feasibility of an automatic admission program for undergraduate students who complete certain academic requirements. The first requirement reflects the conclusion reached earlier in this study that certificate programs, although they are worthwhile for workforce development and useful as blocks that may lead in some cases to an applied associate degree, are not appropriate vehicles for students who want to transfer directly into a baccalaureate degree program at a university.

Recommendation 1. Any automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions which is proposed for statewide implementation should not include an automatic admission guarantee based solely on certificate program completion.

The information presented in this study suggests that the potential pool of students eligible to transfer into four-year institutions is very large, and that many students who are eligible to transfer do not apply for admission to Texas public universities. It also shows that students with the very best academic records (3.0-4.0 GPAs) are not quite as likely to transfer to a baccalaureate institution as those students with GPAs of 2.0 to 2.9. Thus an automatic admission program could potentially offer an incentive for the most high-achieving community college students to transfer and continue their educational endeavors, without restricting universities from admitting any potentially eligible transfer student under the regular transfer process.

Recommendation 2. Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should include academic requirements in addition to completion of an associate degree from a Texas public community or technical college. These requirements should include:

- (a) completion of the 42-SCH core curriculum unless completion is precluded through provision in an existing field of study curriculum (e.g. music and engineering); and
- (b) achievement of a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

HB 64 offered a reasonable model for an automatic admission program designed to increase transfer from public two-year to four-year institutions. In addition to the provisions discussed previously, the bill affirmed that admission to a specific university should be contingent on the availability of space within the institution for the admission of additional students. Provisions were included in the bill to exempt upper-level universities and health science centers, because those institutions that do not offer any lower-division courses and the entire undergraduate population consists of transfer students who have begun their postsecondary educations elsewhere.

The bill also included a provision to exempt any university that, for any academic year, "... has filled through automatic admission as required by the other provisions of this subchapter at least 50 percent of the spaces available for entering undergraduate students at the institution." This provision would have reduced the pressure on any university already devoting most of its available admissions to Top 10 Percent students or others whose admission is mandated under law.

Recommendation 3. Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should exempt upper-level universities and health-related institutions.

Recommendation 4. Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should exempt any university that, with respect to the academic year for which an undergraduate transfer student has applied for admission, has filled through automatic admission as required by the other provisions of the law at least 50 percent of the spaces available for entering undergraduate students at the institution.

Finally, any statewide automatic admission policy should not preclude other individual articulation or joint admission agreements made between individual institutions or departments. Any student claiming automatic admission under a statewide policy should be required to complete institutional application forms by the deadline set by the university. HB 64 also addressed these more routine matters.

Recommendation 5. Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should complement existing articulation or specific admission agreements between institutions such as joint admission or other transfer articulation agreements.

Recommendation 6. To qualify for admission under a statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions, an applicant should be required to submit an application before the expiration of any application filing deadline established by the institution.

Recommendation 7: Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should not guarantee admission to a specific academic program within the institution. Admission to a particular program or school within a general academic teaching institution should be based solely on the requirements of the institution.

Recommendation 8: Any statewide automatic admission program for undergraduates continuing from two-year to four-year institutions should apply to admission of students from Texas public institutions of higher education only.

VII. Conclusions

Closing the Gaps by 2015, the state's higher education plan, establishes ambitious goals for participation and success in higher education that must be met if Texas is to retain its economic vigor and continue to meet the needs of its diverse and rapidly-expanding population. The goals call for innovative strategies to bring about a dramatic increase in the number of students taking advantage of the educational opportunities at colleges and universities across the state. Expanding the number of community college students who complete degree and certificate programs is a valuable contribution to reaching those goals; creating new incentives to increase the transfer of students from two-year programs into baccalaureate programs is critical.

Most students who desire to transfer are able to do so, regardless of whether they have completed an associate degree or the core curriculum. The largest population of students currently transferring from two-year to four-year institutions have earned no degree or award. The highest percentage of students who transfer can be seen among those who have completed academic associate degrees. Yet while the number of transfer students is substantial, fewer than one-fourth of students eligible to do so are engaging in the transfer process.

The real value to a statewide automatic admission program like the one described in HB 64 and mandated for study in SB 1227, Section 58, would be in encouraging more students to follow through with transfer to a four-year institution. Student success and excellence could be affirmed and extended by an automatic admission program for continuing undergraduates who are moving from two-year to four-year institutions. Such a program could successfully increase through-put of students within qualified groups, as long as any potential conflicts with other automatic admission mandates and similar institutional enrollment management requirements have been addressed.

But beyond the issues of enrollment management and yield, of participation and success, is the cultivation of high goals and aspirations among college students in Texas. Community colleges and technical schools serve many students who would otherwise not be able to take advantage of educational opportunities beyond high school. College faculties and para-academic staff are already working hard to create a culture of excellence and critical thinking skills that their students will take with them into every aspect of their lives. An automatic admission policy that sets a higher standard than the average minimum requirement for admission as a transfer student could create an incentive for college students to set their sights high. At the same time, no university would be prohibited from accepting additional students in transfer through the routine process, and most universities would be able to admit a combination of automatic admission and regular admission transfer students.

The issues proposed for study by SB 1227, Section 58, seem to offer an extraordinarily good opportunity to weave together the *Closing the Gaps* goals of participation, success, and excellence. Automatic admission of associate degree

holders who meet certain academic and GPA standards would place a priority on achievement and excellence. It would also potentially leave some space available for other community college students to transfer under existing articulation agreements or transfer admission policies currently in place at universities. Such an automatic admission program would provide a good balance between statewide admission mandates and institutional admission policies, allowing for the admission of non-resident students, students with outstanding community college records who have not completed a degree credential, and other students who may also be poised to enrich the undergraduate culture at Texas universities.

APPENDICES

Appendix A.

House Bill 64 (79th Texas Legislature, 2005) Passed by the House but left in Committee in the Senate

79R404 KEL-F

By: McClendon H.B. No. 64

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the automatic admission to public institutions of higher education of certain undergraduate transfer students.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 51.801, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 51.801. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter, "general academic teaching institution," "governing board," "medical and dental unit," "public junior college," "public technical institute," and "university system" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003.

SECTION 2. Subchapter U, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 51.8065 to read as follows:

- Sec. 51.8065. AUTOMATIC ADMISSION: UNDERGRADUATE TRANSFER STUDENTS HOLDING ASSOCIATE DEGREES OR CERTIFICATES. (a) In this section, "public upper-level institution of higher education" means an institution of higher education that offers only junior-level and senior-level courses or only junior-level, senior-level, and graduate-level courses.
- (b) Except as provided by Subsection (g), each general academic teaching institution shall admit an applicant for admission to the institution as an undergraduate transfer student if in the year preceding the academic year for which the applicant is applying for admission under this section the applicant:
- (1) received a degree or certificate from a public junior college or public technical institute in a program requiring at least 42 semester credit hours in the core curriculum; and
- (2) completed the degree or certificate program with a cumulative grade point average of at least a 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent.
- (c) To qualify for admission under this section, an applicant must submit an application before the expiration of any application filing deadline established by the institution.

- (d) After admitting an applicant under this section, the institution may review the applicant's record and any other factor the institution considers appropriate to determine whether the applicant may require additional preparation for college-level work or would benefit from inclusion in a retention program. The institution may require a student so identified to enroll during the summer immediately after the student is admitted under this section to participate in appropriate enrichment courses and orientation programs. This section does not prohibit a student who is not determined to need additional preparation for college-level work from enrolling, if the student chooses, during the summer immediately after the student is admitted under this section.
- (e) Admission to a specific general academic teaching institution is contingent on the availability of space within the institution for the admission of additional students.
- (f) Admissions to a particular program or school within a general academic teaching institution are based solely on the requirements of the institution.
 - (g) This section does not apply to admission to:
 - (1) a public upper-level institution of higher education; or
- (2) any other general academic teaching institution if, with respect to the academic year for which an undergraduate transfer student has applied for admission, the institution has filled through automatic admission as required by the other provisions of this subchapter at least 50 percent of the spaces available for entering undergraduate students at the institution.

SECTION 3. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the governing board of each general academic teaching institution shall adopt rules or policies relating to the admission of students under Section 51.8065, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than February 1, 2006.

SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2005, and applies beginning with admissions for the 2006 fall semester.

Appendix B.

Senate Bill 1227 §58 (79th Texas Legislature, 2005)

SB 1227 SECTION 58. (a) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall study and make recommendations regarding:

- (1) the feasibility of implementing an automatic admissions program for undergraduate students who:
- (A) earn an associate degree or certificate at a junior college or similar institution; and
- (B) apply to transfer to a general academic teaching institution, as defined by Section 61.003, Education Code; and
- (2) appropriate academic requirements for eligibility for automatic admission under such a program, such as the completion of courses in the core curriculum, as defined by Section 61.821, Education Code, or achievement of a minimum grade point average.
- (b) Not later than October 1, 2006, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall deliver to each legislative standing committee or subcommittee with jurisdiction over higher education a report containing the results of the study and the related recommendations of the board.