

SREB

Southern Regional Education Board

Key Components of an Effective Transfer Policy

States need to make their transfer systems more effective for three reasons: to provide a clearer, shorter path to the bachelor's degree for transfer students, to reduce time to and cost of the bachelor's degree for transfer students, and to save state funding associated with excess credit hours taken by students.

The goal and intent of an effective statewide transfer policy should result in an equally efficient path to the bachelor's degree for transfer students as for students beginning at a 4-year university — meaning that transfer students can earn a bachelor's degree in the same number of hours as native students. The key characteristics of a statewide transfer policy should include:

1. Make the transfer policy statewide, applying to all public universities and community colleges.
2. Develop a common statewide, lower-division (freshman-sophomore year) curriculum for all 2-year colleges and universities.
 - a. This curriculum should consist of no more than 60 credit hours that should result in an A.A. transfer degree
 - b. This curriculum should specify the lower-division courses that will be common statewide for each program major, including general education, major program prerequisites, electives, and so on.
 - Agree statewide on the number of hours to be required for general education, major-related courses, and so on.
 - Have discipline faculty from universities and community colleges:
 - 1) Agree on the specific criteria for courses that will be included in each lower-division component.
 - 2) Review courses at universities and community colleges to determine those courses meeting the common criteria; identify those common statewide courses clearly (common course number or other designation).
3. Ensure that when community college students take the common 60-hour lower-division coursework they will be able to complete a baccalaureate degree at any public university by

taking only the number of hours remaining to meet the total hours required for a specific bachelor's program.

- a. Set a common number of hours for all bachelor's degrees statewide (120 hours for most major programs).
- b. Guarantee that all 60 lower-division hours will transfer and reduce the number of hours to be earned for the degree by 60.
- c. Require that all universities enable transfer students (who have declared a major and taken the specified 60 hours) to graduate by completing only the number of hours remaining to meet the total degree credit requirements.

4. Further Suggestions:

- a. Determine the extent of the transfer problem by an independent study of the community college and university transcripts of transfer students who earn a bachelor's degree. Count all credits attempted (except for non-credit remedial courses) in community college and university study. Include all course credits even if not applied to the bachelor's degree. Compare the total credits earned on average by transfer students to those earned on average by students who begin at a four-year university and earn a bachelor's degree. Compare by program major.
- b. Estimate the cost to the state (appropriation support) and students (tuition) of the additional hours attempted by transfer students compared to students who began and completed their bachelor's degree at a university.
- c. Recognize the absolute importance of students selecting a major no later than the beginning of the second (sophomore) year so that they can take the appropriate major pre-requisites before transfer.
- d. Be clear that community college and university faculty will determine the common core lower-division curriculum by major program and ensure the equivalency of courses and their quality.
- e. Observe that this process is about lower-division work and that university faculty have plenty of opportunity to put their distinctive university and disciplinary marks on students during their junior and senior years.
- f. Monitor results by tracking student time and credits to degree – both in terms of total hours and number of hours taken in upper-division university work.