



Written Testimony for the Senate Committee on Higher Education
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Panel 3: Examine the impact of national, regional, and professional accrediting associations on course credit transfer.

- I. Accreditation in the United States
 - a. U.S. Department of Education
 - b. General Accreditation Information
 - c. Regional Accreditors
 - d. National Accreditors
 - e. Programmatic Accreditors
- II. Course Transfer from Career Colleges and Schools
 - a. U.S. Department of Education (USDE): Accreditation does not provide automatic acceptance by an institution of credit earned at another institution, nor does it give assurance of acceptance of graduates by employers. Acceptance of credit or graduates is always the prerogative of the receiving institution or employer. http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg2.html
 - b. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC): “The accreditation standards of this Commission require member institutions to analyze credit accepted for transfer in terms of level, content, quality, comparability, and degree program relevance. The accreditation standards do not mandate that institutions accept transfer credit only from regionally accredited institutions. When an institution relies on another institution’s regional accreditation as an indicator for acceptability of credit, it should not be the only criterion used for acceptability nor should it be represented as a requirement of this accreditation agency, which it is not.” <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/transfer%20credit.pdf>
 - c. The Career Colleges and Schools of Texas testified during the previous Legislative Session, that they would agree to meet the same standards as are

- required of Public institutions with regard to the course-level learning outcomes, the core curriculum, and the degree specific lower division courses.
- III. Rigor and Quality in Higher Education
- a. Course-level learning outcomes: Teams of faculty from community colleges and universities are working to develop discipline-specific, course-level, learning outcomes for high-demand, lower-division courses. These learning outcomes will provide students, faculty and transcript analysts a higher degree of certainty regarding the breadth of information covered in a particular course and provide greater transferability between institutions.
 - b. Statewide Transfer Compacts: These compacts define the lower division courses that are acceptable to four-year institutions to meet the requirements of specific degree programs. These compacts can take the place of hundreds of individual articulation agreements.
 - c. Core Curriculum Revisions: New core curriculum standards beginning in the Fall of 2014 provide greater levels of consistency across institutions and institution types. These efforts should yield a higher degree of transferability and course acceptance.
- IV. 60 Semester Credit Hour limitation on Associate Degrees
- a. The 79th Legislature in 2005 passed Senator Zaffirini's SB 1529 which required public institutions of higher education to require no more than the minimum number of hours required by SACS, or 120 SCH, for a baccalaureate degree absent compelling academic reasons. The Coordinating Board has defined "compelling academic reason" to mean, "...programmatic accreditation requirements, statutory requirements, and requirements for licensure/certification of graduates." Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Rule 5.43.
 - b. SACS requires institutions to provide a minimum of 60 SCH for associate level degree programs. *The Principles of Accreditation, Standard 2.7.1.*
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAcrcditation.pdf>
 - c. As four-year institutions are required to restrict their degrees to 120 SCH, it follows that two-year institutions should have to meet the comparable standard