

Seamless Student Transfer

The state’s public four- and two-year institutions have a long history of continually enhancing the ease with which students can transfer credit-bearing courses among and between institutions. The Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (MACRAO) Transfer Agreement started in 1972 and was succeeded by the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) in 2014 to provide students with a 30 credit hour block in approved disciplines—equivalent to a full year of college—transferable among all public universities and community colleges statewide. Dozens of laddered two- and four-year degree programs among the state’s community colleges and public universities further serve the needs of students and employers—there are 781 different partnerships, including off-site bachelor’s degree programs and articulation agreements, among the community colleges and public universities.¹ The state’s public universities, community colleges, and independent non-profit colleges are currently voluntarily partnering on the statewide Transfer Steering Committee (TSC). The TSC is providing coordination of a degree pathways initiative, which will convene faculty to try to replace institution-to-institution articulation agreements in a particular major with articulated statewide degree pathways spanning across all participating campuses. The committee is also overseeing the replacement of the Michigan Transfer Network website, which will provide students and academic advisors with even more information about transferring, including easy identification of course-to-course transfer credit equivalencies.

Ongoing efforts to further enhance seamless student transfer among Michigan’s public universities and community colleges should be done on a voluntary basis and in a collaborative manner. The state’s student transfer process should respect institutional departmental discretion in determining the alignment and rigor associated with courses completed at other postsecondary education providers. Final determination as to the transferability of discipline-specific courses to the state’s public universities must remain the responsibility of university departmental faculty who are best positioned to ascertain the credit worthiness of courses completed at other institutions.

Policy Actions:

- Support voluntary efforts to refine a streamlined, simplified and transparent process by which students can ascertain the transferability of credit-bearing courses from and among the state’s community colleges and its public universities.
- Promote recognition that—with an emphasis on two- and four-year degree program alignment and the maintenance of rigorous academic standards—final determination on discipline-specific credit acceptance lies with university departmental faculty.

¹ Report to the Michigan Legislature Pursuant to Secs. 210e & 286a of P.A. 249 of 2016, Feb. 1, 2017.