

**PROGRESS REPORT  
ON  
ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER  
FOR  
ARIZONA PUBLIC  
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION  
  
2006**

Submitted to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee

By  
The Arizona Board of Regents  
and  
The Arizona Community Colleges

December 15, 2006

## Progress Report on Arizona Public Postsecondary Education, 2006

### *Highlights*

- ◆ The Course Applicability System (CAS) website currently experiences peak usage of nearly 4,300 unique visitors per week, with a weekly usage averaging around 4,000 unique visitors per week. In the past, usage data was collected according to number of hits to the website. Industry wide, this is no longer considered to be a reliable number to track, because "hits" can include accessing graphics or traffic that includes hits generated by robots, worms, or replies with special HTTP status codes.
- ◆ Nearly **5000** community college students completed the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC), which satisfies the lower division general education requirements at the universities. This represents a 25 percent increase over last year and a 250% just since 2002.
- ◆ The on-line ATASS newsletter is published quarterly. The newsletter is sent to all Articulation Task Force members as well as all academic administrators. The goal of the newsletter is to improve communication across ATFs and to all academic administrators.
- ◆ The new major guides have been developed for each of the shared majors at the Arizona public universities. These guides allow students to understand which associate degree articulates with the chosen major and the specific courses required for lower-division preparation.
- ◆ In response to advisor and student requests, a website was developed to display information about the transfer of Associate of Applied Sciences degrees from the community colleges to the universities.
- ◆ The JCC developed six recommendations for guiding public higher education in providing increased access to affordable baccalaureate degrees in Arizona. These recommendations have been endorsed by the Arizona Board of Regents and the Arizona Community College Association.
- ◆ All public institutions are current in their data submissions to the Arizona State System for Information on Student Transfer (ASSIST). The ASSIST database is used for community college federal reporting requirements, including Carl Perkins III and Student Right to Know reporting. It has also been utilized this year for grant related research and institutional reporting requirements.
- ◆ In the last academic year, not one student issue has been raised to the Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee – issues have been successfully addressed at the institutional level by the Transfer Student Ombudspersons.

## PROGRESS REPORT ON ARIZONA PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, 2006

### BACKGROUND

In 1996, the Arizona Legislature directed the state's public community colleges and universities to cooperate in articulating course transfers and academic programs, and to collaborate in identifying and meeting the postsecondary education needs of Arizona citizens. In response to this legislative direction, the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) and the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona (SBDCCA) enhanced existing collaborative efforts and implemented services and procedures. When the SBDCCA was disestablished by the state legislature in 2003, the community college responsibilities were assumed by the district governing boards. The oversight of the Joint Conference Committee (JCC) consisting of members of both the public universities and community college districts has ensured cooperation and collaboration. As required, regular progress reports have been submitted to the legislature, 1996-2002 from ABOR and SBDCCA and since 2003, from ABOR and the community colleges.

- Since 1996, the report outlined progress in implementing a new statewide transfer model. The model was designed by the statewide Transfer Articulation Task Force (TATF) and is now being guided by the JCC with the aid of the Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee (APASC), a group of community college and university academic officers. The TATF designated the JCC and APASC as the groups responsible for overseeing and implementing the new transfer model.
- Since 1998, the report to the Legislature has addressed a collaborative process to identify and meet statewide postsecondary needs. The process was developed by the statewide Higher Education Study Committee (HESC), and is being continued by the JCC.

The progress report that follows addresses both postsecondary needs and articulation. It is submitted to the legislature in response to state statute. The text of the statute is shown below.

ARS 15-1824. Transfer Articulation; annual report.

The community colleges and universities shall cooperate in operating a statewide articulation and transfer system, including the process for transfer of lower division general education credits, general elective credits and curriculum requirements for approved majors to facilitate the transfer of community college students to Arizona public universities without a loss of credit toward a baccalaureate degree and that the post secondary education needs of students statewide are met without unnecessary duplication of programs.

B. The Arizona board of regents and the community colleges shall submit an annual report of their progress on both articulation and meeting statewide postsecondary education needs to the joint legislative budget committee on or before December 15 and shall provide a copy of this report to the secretary of state and the director of the Arizona state library, archives and public records.

Through the Joint Conference Committee, representatives from the Arizona Board of Regents and the Arizona community colleges receive periodic reports on articulation and joint postsecondary needs.

## ARTICULATING POSTSECONDARY ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND COURSES

### Overview

Collaborative leadership provided by the Arizona Board of Regents and Arizona community colleges has enabled the successful implementation of the Transfer Model. The Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee has been tasked with oversight of the implementation and evaluation of the model. Regular reports were made to the Joint Conference Committee.

During this year, there has been continuous improvement and on-going refinement of the many components of the model. Significant efforts have been made to ensure that accurate and timely information is available to the various task forces, committees and students regarding policies and processes. The implementation of the model has been facilitated through the efforts of the staff and the appropriate use of technology.

### Strategic Plan Updated

In January 2004 at its annual retreat, APASC created its first strategic plan. A mission, goals and objectives were developed which will provide focus for the committee and provide the criteria for evaluating its work. In January 2006, APASC members reviewed accomplishments and updated the strategic plan to reflect the goals and objectives for 2006-2009. (See Appendix 3)

### Joint Conference Committee (JCC)

#### **Six Recommendations for Increased Access to Baccalaureate Degrees.**

During 2005-06, the JCC developed a set of six recommendations to guide the community colleges and universities in collaboratively improving affordable access to the baccalaureate degree. These recommendations have received support and approval by the Arizona Board of Regents and the Arizona Community College Association. The Governor's P-20 Council has endorsed the first four recommendations. They address increasing the transfer credits from community college programs which are applicable to certain university degrees, expanding institutional partnerships and developing alternative funding mechanisms, and creating a pathway for expanding baccalaureate degrees at the community colleges. Please refer to **Appendix 4** for the complete set of recommendations.

### The Arizona Transfer Model and the Arizona Transfer Articulation Support Systems (ATASS)

#### Curriculum and Policy

- A. Continued Process for Planning and Implementing Change:** The transfer model was designed to allow for flexibility at the institutional level and to support the dynamic needs of college and university curriculum. During this last year, faculty recommended changes to the Associate in Business (ABUS) and the AGEC-S. Both changes were supported by an inclusive process that provided opportunity for input by both university and community college faculty; comprehensive data collection for the decision-making process; and sufficient time for implementation at all institutions. This successful modification of curricula is significant and is indicative of the level of confidence in the process and the quality and integrity of the articulation agreements.
- B. Training for Articulation Task Force Chairs:** Training for all Articulation Task Force (ATF) Chairs was continued this year. ATF Chair Training continues to be delivered at the institutional level. This reflects the strength at participating schools in local expertise about ATF processes and goals, and the strong institutional commitment to support of the ATFs.

- C. Arizona General Education Curriculum:** 5000 students have completed the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) this year. Completion of the AGEC grants the community college student admission to any of Arizona's public universities. As mentioned previously in this report, the AGEC-S was modified during the last year to improve preparation for students who plan to transfer into science majors at the universities.

*AAC&U Summer Institute.* Arizona's AGEC is an example that other states are looking to as a model. Building on that strength, representatives of the General Education Articulation Task Force (GEATF) and faculty representatives from the universities and community colleges attended the American Associate of Colleges and Universities Summer Institute on General Education in June 2006. This representative team will provide leadership for an initiative to explore statewide student learning outcomes for the AGEC.

- D. Evaluation of the Transfer Model:** The Arizona Transfer Model and the ATASS systems have been in full implementation for six years. The Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee, the body that oversees the policy components of the transfer model, began a multi-tiered evaluation process for the model last summer. A self-study by a committee of university and community college representatives found that the requirements of the model, as detailed in the initial TATF report in 1996 have either been implemented or a process is in place to address them. The next step for evaluation is an external review. An RFP for an external evaluator was released in early November without a successful completion of the bid process. The committee re-released an RFP in August 2006 and Hezel and Associates, Syracuse, New York, has been awarded the bid. A final report is expected by the end of the 2006-07 academic year.
- E. Promotion of Transfer Model:** APASC is co-sponsoring a national Biennial Conference in July 2007. The conference theme is "Taking Transfer to a Higher Degree: Services, Structures, and Support for Student Success." In addition to providing a significant opportunity for learning and professional development, the conference also will provide an opportunity to showcase the Arizona Transfer Model to a national audience. The quarterly on-line ATASS newsletter continues to be published. The newsletter is sent to all Articulation Task Force members as well as all academic administrators. The goal of the newsletter is to improve communication across ATFs and to all academic administrators.

### Support Systems

- A. Consistent with the 1996 Transfer Articulation Task Force (TATF) recommendations, the following components of a statewide approach to management are in place to support the Arizona Transfer Articulation Support System (ATASS).**
1. ATF for Admissions and Records. The Admissions and Records ATF has met twice during the last academic year to address issues related to recording and reporting on students' completion of the AGEC, associate degrees, etc which comprise the model, and address problems that may be affecting that and to insure that policies are clear and consistently applied across institutions. From these meetings it was recommended that a list of agencies used for the official translation of international documents be developed. Additionally, after polling the participating institutions it was learned that some award credit by exam based on the date the exam was taken and others use the date of evaluation. This issue was brought to APASC and it was determined that the date the student took the exam should be the "guiding principle" on what credit is awarded.

2. **Organizational Structure:** The Business Continuity Plan, created in 2003 and adopted by each participating institution assures that procedures and resources are now in place on each campus to ensure continuity of CAS and ATASS services to the community in the event of an interruption at the central state server site, or at one or more of the participating colleges and universities.
  3. **Staffing:** Five positions are funded jointly by the legislature, the community colleges and the universities to support statewide efforts. While there has been significant change in staff during the last two years, the changes were completed successfully with a smooth transition and transfer of responsibilities. The ATASS procedures and processes are well-documented, allowing for a stable environment.
  4. **Program Articulation:** The ATFs continue to review and, in some cases modify, the decisions regarding pathways, common courses and other degree requirements. APASC continues to encourage the ATFs to expand their discussions to include joint curriculum planning. Arizona's community colleges have provided data about AGEC courses and requirements to a statewide AGEC database, housed in CAS, using the CAS technical infrastructure to create and maintain it. This statewide AGEC database supports a number of additional resources, including transfer articulation tables for AGEC course articulation among the community colleges, as well as the development of a new advising tool, "Major Guides". The Major Guides combine data from community colleges about AGEC courses and requirements, with statewide data about appropriate transfer pathway options, and baccalaureate degree data from the universities into a single resource for students and advisors.
  5. **ATF Responsibilities:** The Articulation Facilitator is responsible for monitoring the activities and decisions of the 38 Articulation Task Forces. During this last year, much work has been done to provide consistent information to the ATFs for training and on-going updates. Each fall, training sessions are conducted to prepare ATF chairs for their meeting responsibilities. A web-based electronic system, the ATF Chatlines, Contacts and Meeting Manager, supports the timely and consistent reporting from the ATF meetings.
  6. **Accountability:** APASC conducts an annual evaluation to ensure institutional participation in the discipline-specific Articulation Task Forces and other committees by monitoring member attendance and reporting back to the provosts of the institutions when lack of attendance is a identified.
  7. **Advising and Transfer Student Ombudspersons:** One of the priorities for APASC has been to provide timely, accurate and effective advising for transfer students. The Advising ATF has made significant progress, providing information for students at the campus and statewide level. Each community college and university catalog and websites include the relevant transfer policies and procedures. The Advising ATF held its annual statewide conference in May 2006. The statewide staff presented on the transfer system policy updates as well as on changes to the electronic tools that are a part of the system. The process developed by the TSOs is now supported by an online application, TSO Chatlines, which will improve ease and efficiency of information-sharing among TSOs, and will facilitate reporting of transfer issues and their resolutions.
- B. Computer-Based Systems:** The Arizona Transfer Articulation Support Systems (ATASS) budget appropriation has provided the resources necessary for on-going maintenance and development of the

Course Applicability System (CAS) and the Arizona State System for Information on Student Transfer (ASSIST).

1. Course Applicability System (CAS): The original scope of the CAS project is fully implemented. There have been upgrades in all of the software programs that support CAS. The universities have also converted paper transfer guides to interactive on-line guides available through CAS. The programming to activate the new Major Guides, described above, has been completed.

The Course Applicability System (CAS) website currently experiences peak usage of nearly 4,300 unique visitors per week, with a weekly usage averaging around 4,000 unique visitors per week. In the past, usage data was collected according to number of hits to the website. Industry wide, this is no longer considered to be a reliable number to track, because "hits" can include accessing graphics or traffic that includes hits generated by robots, worms, or replies with special HTTP status codes.

This year, upgrades were made to the systems that provide for electronic processing of ATF materials as well an electronic system for communication among ATF members prior and following ATF meetings. This new enhancement has increased ATF communication and thus far expedited the reporting process for ATF chairs.

2. Arizona State System for Information on Student Transfer (ASSIST): The ASSIST database currently holds records for 1.85 million students; each institution has provided at least five years of data. The submission of data on a regular on-going basis is expected henceforth. Measures related to student success and the effectiveness of the transfer model are being developed. Regional groups of ASSIST users have been meeting around the state to establish definitions and categories of transfer students for analysis. Among the standard reports planned is a cohort analysis that tracks students who began at the community college in Fall 1999 toward the completion of a baccalaureate degree. ASSIST continues to be utilized by all community college districts to meet their Carl Perkins III reporting requirements for the federal government. ASSIST is also used to process Student Right to Know information. Community colleges and universities are now beginning to add detailed course data to ASSIST which will enhance the reporting capabilities of the system for all institutions. Three issues of the electronic newsletter were issued and distributed to the 69 authorized ASSIST users and Steering Committee members during the year. Each issue of the newsletter contains updates on the data model, and tips on using the software. The capabilities of the ASSIST database were also demonstrated at user group meetings and at the annual spring meeting attended by 30 participants.

**Challenges:** Problems were encountered with the data in ASSIST resulting in under-reporting the students who had completed the multiple academic options available through the transfer model. Considerable work was devoted this year to verifying institutional AGEC and Associate degree data. All community colleges participated in the supplemental submission of degree data and have agreed to provide current annual degree data in a separate submission each fall. Having accurate data is critical in determining whether the transfer model is significant in improving student success and transfer without loss of credit. The other two key challenges during the year were the successful move of the ASSIST web server to Hyperion 8, and the enhancement of the student ID matching algorithm to identify and correct any student ID mismatches, improving the overall accuracy and performance of the database.

3. Resources: The state, the universities and community colleges jointly fund the technical and online support services. Initially, the state funded 60 percent of the budget and the universities and community colleges contributed the remaining 40 percent. As the system has increased in size and complexity, additional resources have been needed, which the institutions have provided. The universities and community colleges now fund more than 65 percent of the transfer system's total budget and the state allocation is about 35 percent.



## **JOINTLY IDENTIFYING AND MEETING THE STATE'S POSTSECONDARY NEEDS**

During 2005-06, the Arizona public community colleges and universities have acted jointly to meet the postsecondary needs of Arizona citizens. Through the oversight of the Joint Conference Committee and the activities of APASC, there are on-going opportunities for the community colleges and the universities to work together to plan and develop academic programs and articulation agreements. In addition, the Joint Conference Committee of the Universities and Community Colleges (JCC) embarked on an initiative to address expansion of access to baccalaureate degrees in Arizona.

Building on the infrastructure of Arizona's transfer model, the JCC developed six specific recommendations for providing increased access to affordable baccalaureate degrees through greater collaboration between the public community colleges and universities. These recommendations address the following:

- I. Increase transfer credits for select programs**
- II. Increase the number and scope of community college-university partnerships**
- III. Establish joint funding models**
- IV. Expand Arizona University System campuses and statewide programs**
- V. Develop a pathway for baccalaureate degrees at community colleges**
- VI. Explore the need and create a pathway for a 4-year regional degree granting college.**

These recommendations were endorsed by the Arizona Board of Regents and the Arizona Community College Association during the spring of 2006; the Governor's P-20 Council, to date, has endorsed the first four recommendations. For the complete report and description of the recommendations please refer to **Appendix 4**.

### **SUMMARY**

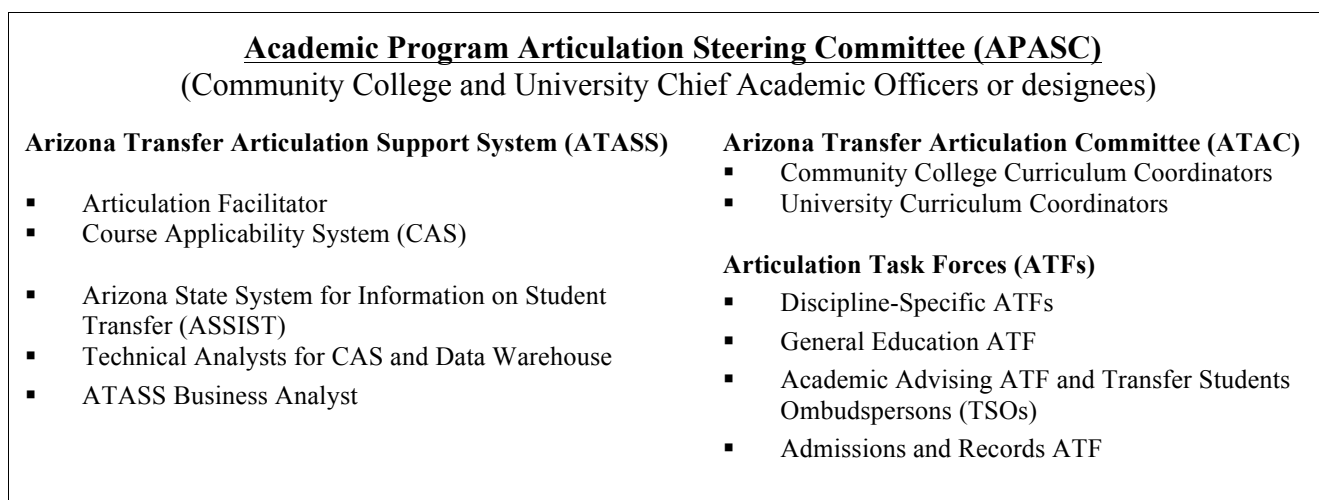
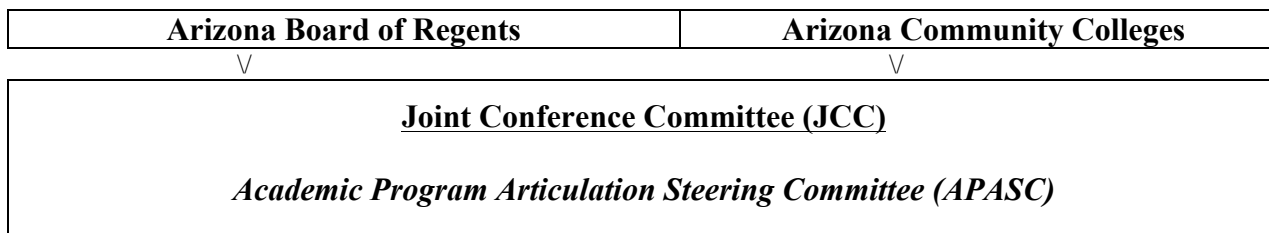
The Arizona transfer model represents a successful effort of collaboration among the public universities and community colleges. Due to the dynamic nature of curriculum, the process is on-going. The collaborative partnership motivates the committees and task forces to consider continuous improvements to the components, and the anticipated increase in student enrollments will require such efforts. Based on these successes and the future needs, continued support of the Arizona Legislature and consideration of the annual budget is requested.

### **APPENDICES**

1. Chart of Arizona State-Wide Higher Education Collaborative Relationships
2. Joint Conference Committee (JCC)
3. Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee (APASC) Strategic Plan Summary 2004-2007
4. JCC Six Recommendations to Improve Access to

## APPENDIX 1

### ARIZONA STATE-WIDE HIGHER EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS



The **Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR)** is the governing board for the state public universities and is directed in legislative statute to address transfer articulation with the Arizona community colleges. The **Joint Conference Committee (JCC)** consists of members from the ABOR and universities and the community colleges. The JCC oversees the work of the Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee (APASC), the Arizona Transfer Articulation Committee (ATAC), the statewide Articulation Task Forces, and the Articulation Facilitator and other ATASS personnel.

The **Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee (APASC)** consists of community college and university chief academic officers. APASC oversees the work of ATASS, the ATAC Committee, and the Articulation Task Forces.

The **Arizona Transfer Articulation Support System (ATASS)** consists of the Articulation Facilitator, the Course Applicability System (CAS), the Arizona State System for Information on Student Transfer (ASSIST), and Technical Analysts for CAS and ASSIST. Resources for ATASS are provided jointly by the Arizona Legislature, the public community colleges, and the public universities.

The **Arizona Transfer Articulation Committee (ATAC)** manages the operational procedures of transfer articulation between and among Arizona’s public post-secondary institutions. ATAC meets to resolve issues related to course equivalencies and to recommend transfer policy changes to APASC.

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### ARTICULATION TASK FORCE STRUCTURE

- ◆ **Discipline-Specific Articulation Task Forces (ATFs):** There are 38 discipline-specific ATFs consisting of community college and university faculty. Each community college or university that offers courses in a given area is eligible for ATF membership. ATFs meet at least once per year to discuss and recommend how community college courses transfer to the universities.

Administration of Justice Studies, Agriculture, Allied Health, Anthropology, Art, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Communication, Computer, Early Childhood Education, Economics, Education, Engineering, English, Exercise Science-Health and Physical Education-Recreation-and Wellness, Family and Consumer Sciences, Geography, Geology, History, Hospitality, Humanities, Interior Design, Journalism and Media Arts, Languages, Mathematics, Music, Nursing, Philosophy, Physics-Physical Science-and Astronomy, Political Science, Psychology, Religious Studies, Social Work, Sociology, Technology, Theatre Arts and Women's Studies.

- ◆ **Academic Advising Articulation Task Force (AATF):** The AATF focuses on advising issues affecting community colleges and universities; its membership includes faculty and academic advisors. The Advising ATF provides support for Transfer Student Ombudspersons who help students with transfer transitions at each community college and university.
- ◆ **General Education Articulation Task Force (GEATF):** The GEATF is responsible for designing and monitoring the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC): a block of courses that transfer from the community colleges to the universities to satisfy general education requirements. The GEATF membership includes faculty and academic administrators.
- ◆ **Admissions and Records Articulation Task Force (ARATF):** This ATF met for the first time in the Spring of 2006. They met in January and April. This ATF was formed in response to a need to develop better communications related to the recording of student completion of the components of the transfer model and to insure that policies and their implementation are clear and consistently applied.

## APPENDIX 2

### The Joint Conference Committee (JCC)

- The JCC was established in 1981 by the Arizona Board of Regents and the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona to provide oversight of agreements between the community colleges and universities that enhance the access of students throughout the state to four-year degree programs. With the disestablishment of the SBDCCA in 2003, the JCC is now composed of members of the Arizona Board of Regents, a university president, two community college presidents and two governing board members.
- In addition to other JCC duties, the committee oversees implementation of the recommendations included in the 1996 Report of the Transfer Articulation Task Force (TATF) and the 1998 Report of the Higher Education Study Committee (HESC). The JCC resolves disagreements which may arise in implementing recommendations. The JCC is assisted in its oversight tasks by the Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee (APASC). The JCC meets no less than twice each year.
- The list below identifies the members of the Joint Conference Committee (JCC) for the year 2006-07

<b>Community College Representatives</b>	<b>Arizona Board of Regents</b>
Dr. Larry Christiansen (Co-Chair) President, Mesa Community College	Ernest Calderon (Co-Chair) Regent
Dr. Brenda Even Trustee, Pima CC District	Christina Palacios Regent
John Lines Trustee, Eastern Arizona College	Ed Hermes Student Regent
Dr. James Horton President, Yavapai College	Dr. John Haeger President, NAU
Kathy Boyle Executive Director Arizona Community College Association	Joel Sideman Executive Director Arizona Board of Regents

## APPENDIX 3

### Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee (APASC) Strategic Plan Summary 2006-2009

#### MISSION

Provide leadership to create and sustain statewide processes and relationships among higher education institutions in Arizona to facilitate students' completion of degrees.

#### SCOPE OF SERVICES

The APASC scope of services supports the mission statement of APASC and the priorities as set by APASC.

#### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

##### **Goal #1 – Continuous improvement of the effectiveness of the ATF System (faculty ownership of the curriculum)**

###### **Objectives**

- Create an APASC subcommittee – the “ATF Advancement Committee”
- Draft a charge for the new subcommittee
- Promote faculty leadership/ownership of the ATFs
- Encourage on-going/year round processes that support dynamic curriculum
  - Recognition/support by institutions of ATF representatives
  - Develop processes for ATFs to follow in order to change a component of the model

##### **Goal #2 – Assess and improve the Transfer Model**

###### **Objectives**

- Develop formal relationships with high schools to create the flow of information about the transfer model from high schools to community colleges to the universities
- Add a representative from a state high school group to APASC
- Continuous improvement of the utilization and collection of data sets to enhance decision making (ASSIST)
- Develop a set of standard definitions and reports that will allow comparative analysis and assessment of the transfer model (quantitative)
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the transfer model for students
- Demonstrate how each component of the transfer model is working
- Assess the student learning outcomes of the AGECE

##### **Goal #3 – Effective administration of ATASS**

###### **Objectives**

- Continuity of APASC membership – importance of orientation and training of new members
- Professional development for staff/Quality Team based on annual assessment and strategic needs
- Examine feasibility of including private institutions in the transfer model
- Examine feasibility of licensing Arizona developed transfer support system software
- Align financial planning with strategic plan

**Goal #4 – Effective communication regarding ATASS to relevant constituents**

**Objectives**

- Ensure that students are aware of the ATASS system (strategies include step-by-step transfer materials for students and counselors)
- Develop strategies for different audiences and purpose

**Issue #5 – Effective support of ATASS by state-of-the-art technology**

**Objectives**

- Research technology to facilitate university to community college and community college to community college course articulation
- Continue to expand course import from all institutions into CAS
- Roll out the advising tool “Major Guides”
- Develop a technology refresh plan

APPENDIX 4



Joint Conference Committee  
of the Community Colleges and Universities

**IMPROVING AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO  
BACCALAUREATE DEGREES:  
SIX RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**Joint Conference Committee**

***Community College Members***

Ms Jan Guy, Co-Chair, Trustee, Cochise College  
Dr. Brenda Even, Trustee, Pima Community  
College  
Dr. Terry Calaway, President, Central Arizona  
College  
Dr. Larry Christiansen, President, Mesa  
Community College  
Ms. Kathy Boyle, Executive Director, Arizona  
Community College Association

***University Members***

Ernest Calderón, Esq., Co-Chair, Regent  
Ms. Christina Palacios, Regent/President  
Mr. Benjamin Graff, Regent  
Dr. John Haeger, President, Northern Arizona  
University  
Mr. Joel Sideman, Executive Director, Arizona Board  
of Regents

**March 2006**

**JOINT CONFERENCE COMMITTEE OF THE  
UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF ARIZONA**

**IMPROVING AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO BACCALAUREATE DEGREES:  
SIX RECOMMENDATIONS  
Executive Summary**

The Joint Conference Committee of the Universities and Community Colleges (JCC) is responsible for the oversight of academic articulation agreements between the public community colleges and universities in Arizona for the purpose of improving and enhancing statewide student access to four-year degrees. Established in 1981, the JCC has equal membership from both sectors. Today, the membership is comprised of representatives from the Arizona Board of Regents, university presidents, community college presidents and community college trustees.

***JCC: Collaborating toward Solutions***

As a uniquely constituted body, with community college and university members collaboratively focused on transfer articulation, the JCC endeavors to participate in developing solutions for improving access to baccalaureate degrees for Arizona's citizens.

- The JCC recognizes that with expected growth and increasing demands for an educated work force, additional improvements could be made to our transfer system, especially to the availability of baccalaureate degrees in more locations throughout Arizona.
- Therefore, the JCC members have spent the summer and fall 2005 developing six recommendations for initiatives intended to improve affordable access to the baccalaureate degree, and were approved during the Fall 2006.
- These recommendations are supported by the university and community college presidents, and were formally endorsed by the Arizona Board of Regents and Arizona Community College Association.
- Adequate funding is "mission critical" to expanding baccalaureate options and, therefore, these recommendations presuppose adequate state funding will be available, prior to implementation.

**Six Recommendations for Improving Affordable Access to the Baccalaureate Degree**

- I. Increase transfer credits for select programs**
- II. Increase the number and scope of community college-university partnerships**
- III. Establish joint funding models**
- IV. Expand Arizona University System campuses and statewide programs**
- V. Develop a pathway for baccalaureate degrees at community colleges**
- VI. Explore the need and create a pathway for a 4-year regional degree granting college.**



## **IMPROVING AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO BACCALAUREATE DEGREES Six Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

The Joint conference Committee has provided oversight to transfer articulation between Arizona's community colleges and universities since 1981, and nationally Arizona is viewed as having one of the best systems in the country. In spite of the success for which Arizona is rightly proud, the members of the JCC recognize that with expected growth and increasing demands for an educated work force, additional improvements could be made to our transfer system. Of special concern is the need for affordable options and availability of baccalaureate degrees in more locations throughout Arizona.

Between May and October 2005, the JCC expanded its regular schedule to hold a series of additional meetings and work group sessions to consider recommendations for addressing this critical need. The outcome of these discussions is the six recommendations, outlined below.

Although the focus of the JCC is to oversee statewide transfer articulation, the members agreed that, as a uniquely constituted group of community college and university representatives, these recommendations need not be limited specifically to transfer articulation. As a result, some of the recommendations go beyond the scope of the JCC. However, the community college and university presidents, the Arizona Board of Regents and trustees from the Arizona community colleges have provided input into these recommendations, and support this effort.

These recommendations are intended to be complimentary to and an enhancement of Arizona's current transfer system. Keeping this system intact is a key component to insuring the success of any new initiatives.

### **Background: Current Transfer Articulation Model**

In 1996, under the leadership of the JCC, the public universities and community colleges developed a new model of transfer articulation. The goal of this model was to improve the existing system and insure that students could transfer to the universities without loss of credit. The model sought to address two issues: to provide an even playing field for students at all of the community colleges, whether urban or rural and to remove barriers to community college students who may not know either the major or the university to which they plan to transfer.

Key provisions of Arizona's transfer system include the following:

- ***Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC).***

The AGECE is a common set of requirements which may be completed at any of the community colleges and will satisfy the lower division general education requirements at all of the universities. In 2003, more than 3000 completed an AGECE, a 37% increase over the previous year, and by 2004, the number increased to 4000.

- ***Common courses.***

More than 40 disciplines in majors offered at the universities have identified at least 2 courses (6 credits) which may be completed at the community college that are guaranteed to apply to that major at any of the public universities. Many majors have identified more. Business, for example, has identified 27 community college credits applicable to the degree.

- **Transfer Pathways.**

Clearer transfer pathways, including statewide associate degrees, have been developed to assist students and academic advisor in planning for transfer, based on the student's "decidedness". Has the student decided on a university? Has the student decided on a major? The student who has decided on a major at a specific university will be advised to follow very specific guidelines; the student who has chosen neither a major nor an institution may complete an associate degree with more general requirements.

- **Arizona's Course Applicability System.**

This system, developed jointly in Arizona and Ohio, is the recognized leader nationally in technology for supporting transfer articulation. A web-based system, CAS provides critical information to students, faculty and academic advisors for planning and transferring, including an online course equivalency guide (how courses from a community college will transfer to any of the universities) and an interactive planning tool to determine how courses completed or planned will meet the requirements for a desired major at a university. CAS receive 140,000 – 400,000 hits per week.

## **SIX RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The JCC members consulted with key stakeholders, including the Arizona Board of Regents, community college trustees, community college and university presidents, and the Governor's P-20 Council, as these recommendations were developed.
- Recommendations I-IV, approved by the JCC in September, have been endorsed by the Arizona Community College Association in November 2005 and the Arizona Board of Regents in December 2005 and by the Governor's P-20 Council. Recommendations V & VI, approved at the December 14 JCC meeting, were approved by ACCA on January 27 and ABOR on February 2, 2006.
- Underlying these recommendations is the recognition that quality programs and a substantial expansion of baccalaureate programs will require additional resources. Adequate funding is "mission critical" and, therefore, these recommendations presuppose adequate state funding will be available, prior to implementation.

### **I: INCREASE TRANSFER CREDITS FOR SELECT PROGRAMS**

The JCC recommends expanding the numbers of baccalaureate programs for which 65-90 hours of transfer credit is possible and applicable from community colleges to designated unique programs.

**Rationale:** Arizona's transfer model allows for one-half plus one course, or 64 hours, of community college credit to apply to the baccalaureate degree. Extending the numbers of credits students could complete at the community college would improve access and affordability. This structure is most appropriate for technical/professional programs. However, some programs that are less sequential and more flexible in their course options may also be appropriate for increasing transfer credits.

- Example: NAU-Gateway CC      Major: Medical Imaging      75 transfer credits

Accountability Measure: During the next academic year, each university will identify programs for which students may transfer more than 64 additional credits from the community college. Some agreements may be specific to a partner community college; others may apply to any community college that offers the appropriate lower division courses.

## **II: INCREASE THE NUMBER AND SCOPE INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

The JCC recommends the increase in the number of university-community college institutional partnerships and expansion of the scope of these partnerships to include these critical infrastructure elements:

- Joint appointment of faculty with both university and community college responsibilities
- Joint admission of qualified students
- Shared/joint advising services
- Shared facilities and dedicated space

***Rationale:*** Institutional partnerships would support the statewide articulation agreements, as well as provide an improved structure for expanding programs on-site at a specific community college (could be 2+2 and 3+1 programs.) Expanded partnerships would remove administrative barriers and allow new programs to be established more quickly. This recommendation would include the following:

1. Dual enrollment for students into the community college and university systems at the time of first enrollment.
  2. Development of joint advising staffs equally expert in the programmatic requirements at both the community college and the university.
  3. Shared facilities on the community college campuses for the offering of baccalaureate degrees.
  4. Appointment of faculty who teach both community college and university courses and hold dual appointments in both institutions.
- Example: NAU-AWC (NAU Yuma)

Accountability Measures: An annual review by the JCC to determine that this recommendation is being implemented.

## **III: ESTABLISH JOINT FUNDING MODELS**

The JCC recommends that collaboratively, the community colleges and universities should focus on joint funding models to assure that necessary dollars are available for both sides of the partnership.

***Rationale:*** Recognizing that fully subscribed integration at the outset of a these partnerships is an unreasonable expectation, particularly in rural sections of the state, one important strategy toward successful implementation will be determining the mechanism used to jointly fund and manage activities. Another might be to have the state provide incentive funding for joint projects, programs, and collaborations. Regardless, it is essential that state leadership

recognize the need to explore and implement new and unique funding strategies that foster the growth of college/university partnerships and expand access and affordability to citizens.

A determination of which partner provides classes, and at what level, should be based on capability and quality of the learning experience for students rather than on the cost to the state. The entity providing service to students should be invisible to students and should receive a common and consistent funding allocation from the state. As funding issues are taken out of the equation, quality academic decisions can be made on the basis of capacity to meet student needs.

#### **IV: EXPAND ARIZONA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM CAMPUSES AND STATEWIDE PROGRAMS**

The JCC supports the Arizona University System's expansion of the branch campuses and statewide offerings:

- NAU to open branch or regional campuses where there is an identified need.
- ASU in expanding their branch campuses (West, Polytechnic and Downtown)
- UA in developing UA South

**Rationale:** Under the 2003 Changing Directions initiative, the three state universities defined their distinct missions, moving away from a "one size fits all" model. The University Redesign study, completed in 2005, expanded that concept by differentiation within each of the three institutions. The features of this differentiation include clear delineation of two distinct types: 1) Differentiation by services provided, and, 2) differentiation in the way these serves are funded in order to lower tuition rates. NAU, UA South and the West, Polytechnic, and Downtown campuses of ASU will focus on undergraduate education and will implement cost models for these campuses and for the NAU statewide programs. NAU will offer a program, face to face anywhere 25 people are qualified and able to enroll in a program NAU offers.

The JCC supports the efforts of the universities to implement these plans.

#### **V: DEVELOP A PATHWAY FOR BACCALAUREATE DEGREES AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

The JCC recommends establishing a pathway for the expansion of baccalaureate opportunities in the state of Arizona. Expanding baccalaureate opportunities beyond the current higher education structure would require a systematic review process based on established criteria. Requests for consideration of a new baccalaureate program or delivery option outside of the university structure would follow a 3-step process:

##### **A. Determining need**

A local community college board in cooperation with the Arizona Community College Association (ACCA) and an Arizona Regents university in cooperation with the Arizona Board of Regents would conduct a study that would determine the local need for additional baccalaureate program(s) or delivery options. This study would document:

- Market (employer/workforce) demand for additional or expanded baccalaureate degree programs

- Student interest in enrolling in these additional or expanded baccalaureate degree programs
- Accessibility of existing baccalaureate degree programs in terms of capacity and delivery options

### **B. Determining the University Program Provider**

Once a need is determined, one or more of the universities, through the Arizona Board of Regents, may submit a proposal to address the new or expanded baccalaureate program.

### **C. Determining the Non-University Program Provider**

If none of the universities is able to respond to the need for new or expanded baccalaureate programs, a community college may offer the degree provided the following criteria are met:

- Local community college board grants approval to offer a baccalaureate program in a specialized area.
- Local county tax would not be used for upper division course costs.
- Additional funding is provided for program development and start-up.
- Funding is weighted for 300 for 400 level courses and state aid.

### **D. Program Criteria**

Whether the new or expanded degree is addressed by a university or a community college, the proposal must include the following:

- **Program Quality:** Will the proposed program be of sufficient academic quality? Are appropriate faculty members available?
- **Impact:** will the program significantly reduce the identified need?
- **Implementation/Timing:** Can the proposed program be implemented in a timely and effective manner? What is the expected length of time before the program will be offered?
- **Cost Effectiveness:** Will the proposed program provide the most cost effective use of the state's total education resources (including state and local taxes) to meet the identified workforce needs? Are the incremental costs (including capital outlay) to the state less than other options?
- **Funding:** Is appropriate additional funding provided to support the degree program?

**Rationale:** Many communities and local community college boards have expressed concern that access to baccalaureate degrees is limited. In some cases, the universities have or will be able to bring the appropriate program into the area; however, in some cases it may be more appropriate for the community college to deliver the full baccalaureate program. This system-wide approach will provide statewide accountability to changes in higher education system.

## **VI: EXPLORING THE NEED AND CREATING A PATHWAY FOR A REGIONAL BACCALAUREATE DEGREE GRANTING COLLEGE**

If there is an identified need for additional baccalaureate programs that are not met by the universities, the JCC recommends a pathway to create a regional baccalaureate degree

granting college by changing the mission of an existing community college. Need should be determined by the same process as outlined in V.A. In addition, the following preconditions would need to be addressed:

- Local community college board has indicated both the need and willingness to support expansion of the respective community college mission
- There is limited university access for students in the region
- Appropriate accreditation is available and could be obtained
- Sufficient infrastructure exists to support a baccalaureate degree granting college
- An implementation plan is developed and submitted to JCC, the legislature, Office of the Governor, and the Arizona Board of Regents
- Governance issues are addressed between the community college board, ABOR, the legislature and the appropriate accrediting agencies

**Rationale:** In 2004-05, the Arizona Board of Regents commissioned a study of the structure of the university system to determine whether a different structure was warranted in the face of an exploding population and a low percentage of residents with college degrees. Although the study was specifically focused on the university system, it did note the state's lack of 4-year undergraduate regional colleges. Simultaneously, community colleges also launched a study of higher education within Arizona and their recommendations pinpointed the need for additional baccalaureate opportunities. As Arizona begins to address education through a P-20 focus, a statewide study would provide the type of information and data to make strategic decisions about the future of higher education.