

COLLEGE CREDIT MOBILITY: CAN TRANSFER OF CREDIT POLICIES BE IMPROVED?

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON 21ST CENTURY
COMPETITIVENESS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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C O N T E N T S

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Hearing held on May 5, 2005 | 1 |
| Statement of Members: | |
| Kildee, Hon. Dale E., Ranking Member, Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, Committee on Education and the Workforce | 4 |
| Prepared statement of | 5 |
| McKeon, Hon. Howard P. "Buck", Chairman, Subcommittee on 21st Cen- tury Competitiveness, Committee on Education and the Workforce | 1 |
| Prepared statement of | 3 |
| Statement of Witnesses: | |
| Day, Dr. Philip R., Jr., President, National Articulation and Transfer Network, San Francisco, CA | 6 |
| Prepared statement of | 8 |
| Klebacha, Dr. Theresa A., Director of Strategic Initiatives, Florida De- partment of Education, Tallahassee, FL | 20 |
| Prepared statement of | 22 |
| Sullivan, Jerome H., Executive Director, American Association of Colle- giate Registrars and Admissions Officers, Washington, DC | 25 |
| Prepared statement of | 27 |
| Zimpher, Dr. Nancy L., President, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH | 11 |
| Prepared statement of | 13 |

COLLEGE CREDIT MOBILITY: CAN TRANSFER OF CREDIT POLICIES BE IMPROVED?

Thursday, May 5, 2005

U.S. House of Representatives

Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness

Committee on Education and the Workforce

Washington, DC

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10 a.m., in room 2175, Rayburn, Hon. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives McKeon, Boehner, Tiberi, Osborne, Inglis, Boustany, Kuhl, Kildee, Wu, and Bishop.

Staff Present: Kevin Frank, Professional Staff Member; Alison Griffin, Professional Staff Member; Amy Raaf, Professional Staff Member; Deborah L. Emerson Samantar, Committee Clerk/Intern Coordinator; Brad Thomas, Legislative Assistant; Ricardo Martinez, Minority Legislative Associate/Education; Alex Nock, Minority Legislative Associate/Education; and Joe Novotny, Minority Legislative Assistant/Education.

Chairman MCKEON. A quorum being present, the Subcommittee on the 21st Century Competitiveness of the Committee on Education and the Workforce will come to order.

We are holding this hearing today to hear testimony addressing the question of, College Credit Mobility, Can Transfer of Credit Policies Be Improved?

Under Committee rule 12(b), opening statements are limited to the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member of the Committee. Therefore, if other Members have statements, they will be included in the hearing record.

With that, I ask unanimous consent for the hearing record to remain open 14 days to allow Members' statements and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted to the official hearing record.

Without objection, so ordered.

STATEMENT OF HON. HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON 21st CENTURY COMPETITIVENESS, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

Good morning, and thank you all for joining us today for this important hearing on college credit mobility. I want to welcome our

witnesses and thank them for taking the time to appear before the Subcommittee.

Today's hearing will examine if current policies regarding the mobility of academic credit at the State and institutional level create artificial barriers to higher education and to examine the best practices that some States may be doing to permit fair and efficient transfer of credit.

With data showing more than 50 percent of students attend multiple institutions of higher education, it has become increasingly important for students to have the flexibility to transfer their credits from one school to another. And with increasing numbers of nontraditional students pursuing higher education for the first time or returning to school to complete their education, it has become more important than ever that college students are free to transfer from one institution to another without unfairly losing credit for quality courses they have completed.

I have heard from many in the higher education community who believe there is nothing wrong with the current system. The message I hear is: we're doing just fine; just send us more money.

However, when institutional policies support the blanket denial of credit transfers, I believe there is something wrong. Artificial barriers to college credit mobility inhibit student completion rates and help drive up the cost of post-secondary education.

If students are blocked from transferring from a 2-year institution to 4-year institution or from a proprietary institution to any other institution for reasons considered to be territorial or political, the student is forced to repeat course work, extend the time to completion, and all this comes at an additional cost. But this cost is borne not just by the students but by parents and taxpayers as well. We are all paying for students to take the same courses twice.

In addition, according to the College Board, average tuition and fees at 2-year institutions for this school year were only about 40 percent of those at public 4-year institutions. Students and their families should be able to take advantage of these low-cost institutions and the quality education they provide to help hold down the families' educational costs during their first 2 years of school, and they should be able to plan ahead when they seek portability with the credits they earn. I believe students should have good information on where those credits will be accepted and have the confidence they will not have to start over from the beginning to finish their degrees at 4-year schools.

Recognizing the importance of college credit mobility, Chairman Boehner and I introduced H.R. 609, the College Access and Opportunity Act. To address the issue of college credit mobility, our bill simply requires institutions to have a transfer of credit policy, make that policy public, and follow that policy. It is absolutely critical that institutions of higher education provide better information to parents and students so they can make informed decisions on what college or university will meet their individual needs.

Our bill also ensures credits are not unfairly or arbitrarily denied based solely on the agency or association that accredits an institution, so long as they are recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education. It is important to point out that the bill contains language specifying that institutions retain all rights to deny credits based

on the criteria they themselves establish. It does not mandate what course work must be accepted by any institution.

The witnesses that are with us today will talk about State and institutional level programs that are working to address college credit mobility. I applaud the work that is already under way in some States and institutions to improve college credit mobility for students, and I am eager to learn more about these efforts. I also believe their testimony will show a commitment to addressing the challenges of college credit mobility.

As we enter the 21st century, it is our duty and obligation to act, to drive improvements to the current system to reflect today's increasingly mobile student body. I look forward to hearing our witness testimony here today, and I thank you all for joining us to discuss this important topic, and I look forward to working with you as we move forward on this issue.

I now yield to Congressman Kildee for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Chairman McKeon follows:]

Statement of Hon. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, Chairman, Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, Committee on Education and the Workforce

Good morning and thank you all for joining us today for this important hearing on college credit mobility. I want to welcome our witnesses and thank them for taking the time to appear before the subcommittee.

Today's hearing will examine if current policies regarding the mobility of academic credit at the state and institutional level create artificial barriers to higher education and to examine the best practices that some states may be doing to permit fair and efficient transfer of credit.

With data showing more than 50 percent of students attend multiple institutions of higher education, it has become increasingly important for students to have the flexibility to transfer their credits from one school to another. And, with increasing numbers of non-traditional students pursuing higher education for the first time, or returning to school to complete their education, it has become more important than ever that college students are free to transfer from one institution to another without unfairly losing credit for quality courses they have completed.

I have heard from many in the higher education community who believe there is nothing wrong with the current system. The message I hear is, "We're doing fine. Just give us more money."

However, when institutional policies support the blanket denial of credit transfers, I believe there is something wrong. Artificial barriers to college credit mobility inhibit student completion rates and help drive up the cost of postsecondary education.

If students are blocked from transferring from a two-year institution to a four-year institution, or from a proprietary institution to any other institution for reasons considered to be territorial or political, the student is forced to repeat course work, extend the time to completion, and all this comes at an additional cost. But this cost is borne not just by the students, but by parents and taxpayers as well. We're all paying for students to take the same courses twice.

In addition, according to the College Board, average tuition and fees at two-year institutions for this school year were only about 40% of those at public four-year institutions. Students and their families should be able to take advantage of these low cost institutions and the quality education they provide to help hold down the families' educational costs during their first two years of school, and they should be able to plan ahead when they seek portability with the credits they earn. I believe students should have good information on where those credits will be accepted and have the confidence they will not have to start over from the beginning to finish their degrees at four-year schools.

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As we enter the 21st Century, it is our duty and obligation to act to drive improvements to the current system to reflect today's increasingly mobile student body. I look forward to hearing our witness testimony here today, and I thank you all for joining us to discuss this important topic and I look forward to working with you as we move forward on this issue.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DALE E. KILDEE, RANKING MEMBER,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON 21st CENTURY COMPETITIVENESS, COM-
MITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE**

Mr. KILDEE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased today to join you, my friend and my colleague and my Chairman on today's hearing. This is an incredibly important issue to students, schools and for the cost and efficiency of our Federal student aid programs. I am very pleased that we have an expert panel here today to help us in our discussions today.

The systems and policies our institutions, States and the Federal Government have in place on transfer of credit are significant to college access and graduation. The community college student whose ultimate goal is a 4-year degree needs to know up front which of his credits will transfer. A student who returns to college after several years needs a clear understanding how many existing credits will be considered. While many students have successful transfer experience, those who encounter problems are those we should be concerned about today.

Lost credits translate into the need to repeat courses and higher education loan debt. States have responded to this problem through various means. Some States have created articulation agreements and others have created common course numbering among their institutions. Several State legislatures have mandated their colleges and universities to resolve this issue.

I do not believe that the Federal Government has all the answers here. We can and should encourage States and institutions to develop systems and policies to ease the transfer of legitimate credits. We should also increase the sharing of information between sending and receiving institutions. All this must be done while respecting the right of colleges to judge the acceptance of credits based on quality.

Colleges to which students are transferring must have the information to judge the quality and rigor of its students' courses. Unfortunately, too little of this happens now. H.R. 609, introduced by Chairman McKeon, has several provisions which are intended to address difficulties in transferring credits. We need to find solutions for students who struggle to transfer these credits.

I look forward to learning more about this. I am sure we can pursue this in a very bipartisan way as Mr. McKeon and I usually do.

I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Chairman.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Kildee follows:]

Statement of Hon. Dale E. Kildee, Ranking member, Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, Committee on Education and the Workforce

Good morning, I am pleased to join my friend and colleague, Chairman McKeon at today's hearing on transfer of credit. This is an incredibly important issue to students, schools and for the cost and efficiency of our Federal student aid programs. I am very pleased that we have an expert panel of witnesses to help inform us in our discussions today.

The systems and policies our institutions, States and the Federal government have in place on transfer of credit are critical to college access and graduation. A community college student whose ultimate goal is a four year degree needs to know up front which of his credits will transfer. A student who returns to college after several years needs a clear understanding of how existing credits will be considered. While many students have successful transfer experiences, those who encounter problems are those we should be concerned about today. Lost credits translate into the need to repeat courses and higher student loan debt.

States have responded to this problem through various means. Some States have created articulation agreements, and others have created common course numbering among their institutions. Several State legislatures have mandated their colleges and Universities to resolve this issue. Unfortunately, too many States have done too little to address this problem.

I do not believe that the Federal government has all the answers here. We can and should encourage States and institutions to develop systems and policies to ease the transfer of legitimate credits. We also must increase the sharing of information between sending and receiving institutions. All of this must be done while respecting the right of colleges to judge the acceptance of credits based on quality. Colleges to which students are transferring must have the information to judge the quality and rigor of a student's courses. Unfortunately, too little of this happens now.

H.R. 609, legislation introduced by Chairman McKeon, has several provisions which are intended to address difficulties in transferring credits. Rather than criticize those provisions, I simply believe they do not go far enough. We need to find solutions for students who struggle to transfer their credits. I look forward to learning more about what we can and should do in a bipartisan pursuit of this goal.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCKEON. Thank you, Mr. Kildee.

We have a very distinguished panel of witnesses before us. I thank you all for being here today.

First, we will hear from Dr. Philip Day. Dr. Day is currently the Chancellor of City College in San Francisco. Prior to arriving at City College, Dr. Day served as president at community colleges in Florida, Massachusetts and Maryland. A global traveler, Dr. Day has served on numerous State and local educational agency boards and in leadership positions with several professional associations.

He is currently the founding president of the National Articulation and Transfer Network, a voluntary consortium of schools dedicated to improving the transfer process to increase access to post-secondary education for students.

I would like to yield now to the Chairman of the Full Committee, Chairman Boehner, the gentleman from Ohio, to introduce our next witness.

Mr. BOEHNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my pleasure to introduce our second witness today, Dr. Nancy Zimpher.

Dr. Zimpher is currently the President of the University of Cincinnati, not quite in my district, but almost. Prior to assuming this role, she served as the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, and she was the Dean of the College of Education at The Ohio State University.

Dr. Zimpher has been widely recognized for her expertise in a range of higher education issues, and she currently co-chairs the Ohio Board of Regents Articulation and Transfer Advisory Counsel. The Council implements policies aimed at addressing the issues of students that transfer their credits between Ohio's colleges and universities, as well as increasing student mobility through the Ohio higher education system.

I just want to say, welcome, and we are glad you are here.

Chairman MCKEON. Following Dr. Zimpher, we will hear from Dr. Theresa Klebacha. Dr. Klebacha is the Director of Strategic Initiatives with the Florida Department of Education. In this position, she oversees the State of Florida's Pathways to Success Initiative. This program provides information to students about Florida's groundbreaking efforts to provide students easier opportunities to transfer credits between public and participating private institutions of higher education in the State.

Prior to joining the Florida Department of Education, Dr. Klebacha worked in the Florida House of Representatives and as an adjunct professor at Illinois State University.

Finally, we will hear from Mr. Jerome Sullivan. Mr. Sullivan is the Executive Director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, AACRAO.

AACRAO is a nonprofit association of institutions of higher education and campus enrollment services officials that provide professional development, guidelines and voluntary standards for higher education officials and provides a forum for discussion regarding policy initiation and development at the institutional level.

Mr. Sullivan's career in higher education has spanned nearly 40 years. His particular areas of interest include access to post-secondary education, veterans education and nontraditional students.

Before the witnesses begin their testimony, I would like to remind you how those lights work. I think you have been told you have 5 minutes, and the light is green at the start. And when you have a minute left to go, it is yellow, and when your time is up, its red light comes on.

With that, we would like to begin with you, Dr. Day.

STATEMENT OF DR. PHILIP R. DAY, JR., PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER NETWORK, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Dr. DAY. Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Subcommittee on where the transfer policy in higher education can be improved, and I am here to say it can, it must and it will.

In the spring of 2001, only a few blocks from the United States Capitol, the leaders of seven national associations of education and several college presidents joined the president of Howard University and me in creating the National Articulation Transfer Network. We had no office, no staff, no funding and no mandate, but, undeterred, we ceremoniously signed the cooperative agreement and began work.

Soon afterwards, at our first coalition meeting, we were confirmed in our mission when a student named Aretha movingly informed us that she had been accepted as a transfer student with

a strong grade point average and an accredited degree from a prominent community college, but her chosen baccalaureate institution had denied most of the 60 credits she had earned, leaving only 26 credits, less than 1 year of academic course work. The credits were eventually restored through our intervention, but it was this Rosa Parks incident that galvanized the resolve of NATN.

The National Articulation Transfer Network is a coalition of more than 300 institutions and is chartered as a nonprofit organization with a national board of directors. The initial member institutions were community colleges, historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic service institutions, tribal colleges and the Council of Great City Schools. However, we have been expanding with Asian-Pacific-Islander-serving institutions and other post-secondary institutions.

Our original sponsors were the major leaders in education, including the parent associations of the referenced minority-serving institutions, as well as AACC, ACE, the Council of Great City Schools, the League For Innovation, ASCU and AACRAO, the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers, as you know.

The mission of NATN is to improve traditional articulation and transfer patterns for students, enabling them to make successful transitions from their high school to community colleges and on to baccalaureate institutions, with special attention to the network of minority-serving institutions.

We are dedicated to accomplishing this mission not just locally or statewide but nationally, as today's students are highly mobile, advancing through educational levels and across institutions, increasingly moving beyond State borders and swirling among traditional and nontraditional levels of career training and education.

The development phase of NATN has been made possible by an initial grant by FIPSE, by several congressional allocations with assistance from the Congressional Black Caucus and Hispanic Caucus and other key legislators and by funding from Ford and the Lumina Foundation. We are now seeking funding for the next phase of our work, nationalizing NATN.

The accomplishments of NATN may be described in two areas. The first is improving transfer policy and practice. The NATN framework classifies transfer at three critical levels: institution to institution; program to program; and course to course.

At the institution level, our general academic transfer agreement ensures that associate degree graduates who meet the admissions requirements of transfer institutions, usually a 2.5 GPA, can transfer all of their lower division credits to fulfill graduation requirements at receiving institutions across the country.

At the program level, we seek consensus on two articulation blocks, the general education core curriculum and the field of study or major core curriculum. The articulation agreement in engineering-related program areas recently negotiated between Miami Dade College, a member of our network from its inception, with Georgia Institute of Technology, is an excellent example of this approach.

Finally, at the course level, we anticipate a framework which replaces traditional course-to-course articulation practices with coursework aligned to learning outcomes or competencies.

The second accomplishment of NATN is the development of Web technology to facilitate the transfer process. Over the past 2 years, our interactive Web-based system for students and advisers, CollegeStepz, has been developed.

The initial components are portal and introductory media, college information and college search, as well as an articulation transfer of information. A searchable data base includes information on every college in the country, with provisions for their transfer policies and agreements.

Eventually, and with sufficient funding, CollegeStepz will embrace comprehensive articulation transfer processes, online communications with advisers, education and career planning, financial aid and student tracking. All of this work is currently in operation at five regional pilot sites in Atlanta, Baltimore-Washington, Houston, San Antonio and San Francisco, with additional pilots expected to be under way this summer.

Let me say in closing what I think is required. There is no question that higher education needs congressional support and encouragement for a national effort in articulation and transfer, but we need the encouragement to do it on a voluntary basis, not on a mandatory basis, and certainly not with burdensome reporting requirements.

The colleges and universities are getting the message and demonstrating their support for the kind of engagement that NATN offers, as evidenced by the participation of the three largest associates, ACE, AASCU, and AACC, associations that represent over 400 minority-serving institutions, HACU, NAFEO and AIHEC and the network of 1,800 Servicemen's Opportunity Colleges and, of course, AACRAO.

We need to encourage support and allow this grassroots voluntary approach to prove that higher education can and will get the job done. I would suggest, therefore, that in conjunction with the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the adoption of a national goal to significantly increase the numbers of students successfully transferring their degrees and accelerating baccalaureate degree completion, especially for students of color, through voluntarily compliance and commitment.

The National Articulation and Transfer Network stands ready, with your support and commitment, to help facilitate the achievement of that goal.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Day follows:]

Statement of Dr. Philip R. Day, Jr., President, National Articulation and Transfer Network, San Francisco, CA

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to address the subcommittee on whether transfer policy in higher education can be improved, and I am here to say that it can, it must, and it will.

In the spring of 2001, only a few blocks from the United States Capitol, the leaders of seven national associations of education and the presidents of an array of colleges and universities joined the President of Howard University and me in creating the National Articulation and Transfer Network. We had no office, no staff, no funding, and no mandate. But undeterred, we ceremoniously signed the cooperative agreement and began work. Soon afterwards, at our first coalition meeting in Dallas with 25-30 institutions attending, we were confirmed in our mission when a student named Doretha movingly informed us that she had just been accepted as a transfer student with a strong grade-point-average and an accredited degree from a promi-

ment community college on the West Coast and seeking to transfer to an East Coast institution, but the nationally recognized baccalaureate institution had denied acceptance of most of the 60 credits she had earned, leaving only 26 credits, less than one year of academic coursework. The credits were restored after intervention on our part, but it was this “Rosa Parks” incident that galvanized the resolve of NATN. I want to tell you now what we have done in just a few short years and where we hope to go.

What is NATN?

The National Articulation and Transfer Network is a coalition of more than 300 institutions, until recently led by a steering committee but now chartered as a non-profit organization with a national board of directors. The initial member institutions were Community Colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges. However, we have been expanding with Asian-Pacific Islander Serving Institutions and other secondary and postsecondary institutions. The sponsors who established NATN were the major leaders in education: the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the United Negro College Fund, the American Association of Community Colleges, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, the American Council on Education, the Council of the Great City Schools, the League for Innovation in the Community College, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and most recently the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. NATN is truly a coalition of forces for change.

The mission of NATN is to improve traditional articulation and transfer patterns through the development of a continuum of pathways for students, enabling them to make successful transitions from their high schools to local community colleges and on to baccalaureate institutions, with special attention to the network of minority serving institutions. We are dedicated to accomplishing this mission not just locally or statewide but nationally, as today’s students are highly mobile, advancing through educational levels and across institutions, moving beyond state borders, and “swirling” among traditional and non-traditional forms of career training and education.

Our accomplishments have derived from the organization of five work groups, each with a chairperson and its members drawn from affiliated institutions. The work groups have provided guidance with respect to the development of articulation and transfer policies, the identification and promulgation of best practices, and the launching of an interactive web-site as the major resource for students and their advisors, CollegeStepz. The work groups, which meet during annual conferences, also collaborate through teleconferences and other work sessions during the year.

The development phase of NATN has been made possible by a seed-funding grant by the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, and by Congressional allocations between 2002 and 2004, with the assistance of the Congressional Black and Hispanic caucuses and other key legislators. Additionally, NATN has also received private funding from the Ford Foundation and from the Lumina Foundation for Education. We are now seeking funding for the next phase of our work, nationalizing NATN.

What is Happening Nationally?

Before offering further commentary on NATN and its accomplishments, I’d like to provide the subcommittee with a brief overview of what colleges and universities are already doing to facilitate articulation and transfer. Nationally, almost half of the students enrolled in college begin their postsecondary education at the community college. Of those who enter the community college, almost three-fourths (71%) intend to earn a bachelor’s degree, including students in vocational programs. Still the transfer rate hovers between 20 to 25 percent nationally, with minority students lagging as much as 10 to 20 percentage points below the transfer rate for white students. Some of the factors related to the relatively low rate of transfer are heavily influenced by patterns of attendance, student flow and numbers of credit hours attempted per semester. However, there are other institutional and systemic factors that influence this equation as well. This is particularly troubling since nearly half of the minority students in higher education are enrolled in community colleges. Indeed, urban centers such as Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and Detroit have community colleges that enroll “minority majorities.” If we accept the baccalaureate as a keystone to upward mobility and sustained prosperity, then such lackluster transfer rates are untenable.

A recent publication of the American Association of Community Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, *Access to the Baccalaureate*, identifies several barriers that impede the transfer of community college

students. Variations in institutional policies create situations where course credits are transferred but not applied to the major, forcing students to repeat courses and adding to their financial burden. Even students who have earned traditional transfer degrees, the Associate of Arts or the Associate of Science, are finding that limited seats are available because of budget cuts and competing priorities. Moreover, there is a persistent attitude among four-year faculty that community college programs lack academic rigor. And community college faculty, likewise, may not trust that their university counterparts will accept transfer students, perceiving intransigence instead of interest. Even in states where there are highly developed support systems, there are insufficient incentives to encourage cooperation between educational sectors or reward successful articulation and transfer, and students are often left to their own devices to figure out the “transfer maze.”

Nonetheless, many initiatives and innovations have occurred at state and local levels over the past decade. As a result, eighty percent of the states have established articulation agreements between two and four-year publicly-funded colleges and universities within their states. However, the efficacy of such agreements is often tied to the specificity of the language and the degree of enforcement. Giving transfer more muscle, thirty-three states, such as in Colorado and North Carolina, have created legislation that promotes cooperative agreements with clearly established guidelines. Twenty-three states, with the leadership of state boards of higher education, have developed common general education core curricula (e.g., the California Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum and the Massachusetts Transfer Compact). To support this work, several states have established statewide transfer councils. Arizona, for instance, has transfer councils composed of two and four-year college representatives for every major discipline, overseeing and recommending the transferability of courses. A few states—Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas, and Wyoming—have established common course numbering systems, simplifying the transfer process. At the same time, technology has provided sophisticated solutions. FACTS in Florida and ARTSYS in Maryland enable students to plot out a transfer course to the baccalaureate by examining course requirements, programs of study, and course applicability through dynamic Web technology.

Concurrently, many promising curricular initiatives are emerging. Florida is developing a K–20 philosophy to focus on the entire educational spectrum and enable the smooth transition of students from elementary, middle, and high school through the community college and the baccalaureate. Colleges in Kentucky and Oklahoma are experimenting with “completer colleges” that offer a specialized baccalaureate, such as a Bachelor of Professional Studies, or a curriculum pathway that relates to the associate degree and guarantees full transfer and applicability of credits. In another approach, Charter Oaks State College in Connecticut and Excelsior College in New York have developed baccalaureate degrees that “consolidate” credits which students may have earned from many different colleges over time. A recent and encouraging development is the replacement of the course-to-course equivalency model for with a competency-outcomes approach to articulation and transfer. Minnesota has a competency structure for general education; Maryland has completed an outcomes-based program of study for teacher education; and Washington is developing a competency-based model for transfer. While these initiatives are promising, they are nevertheless limited by state borders, leading to the need for, and the potential of, a national network to promote best practices and effective policy countywide.

What has NATN Accomplished?

The accomplishments of NATN may be described in two areas: (a) fostering the adoption of policies and practices for improving transfer and articulation nationally and (b) providing access via web-technology to facilitate the transfer process by providing real-time information for advising and counseling and to support student success.

1. Transfer Policy and Practice. NATN has developed a three-tiered framework with accompanying models designed to maximize credit transfer. The framework is based on extensive research in the field, drawing both on the literature as well as best practices across the country. Funding by the Lumina and Ford Foundations has fueled this research while our work groups have created and refined the models to support associate degree articulation for both transfer and career programs—AA, AS, and AAS—and promoted regionally through articulation and transfer councils organized by NATN.

The NATN framework classifies transfer at three critical levels: institution-to-institution, program-to-program, and course-to-course. At the institutional level, our General Academic Transfer Agreement ensures that associate degree graduates who meet the admissions requirements of the transfer institution—usually a 2.5 grade

point average—can transfer their lower division credits to fulfill graduation requirements at receiving institutions throughout the country. This transfer package generally consists of 60 credits, 36 credits in the general education core and 24 credits in the major or electives.

At the program level, we seek consensus on two articulation “blocks”, the general education core curriculum and the field-of-study or major core curriculum. The articulation agreement in engineering-related program areas recently negotiated between Miami Dade College (a member of our Network from its inception) with the Georgia Institute of Technology is in excellent example. Proposed agreements at this level draw upon the best practices of states and institutions in creating universally applicable core curricula, often relying on learning outcomes or competencies as the currency for articulation and transfer. Finally, at the course level, we anticipate a framework which replaces traditional course-to-course articulation practices with coursework aligned to learning outcomes or competencies.

2. Transfer Technology. Over the past two years, NATN’s interactive web-based system for students and advisors, CollegeStepz, has been designed and developed in partnership with its technology contractor, The Rsmart Group. The initial components include a portal and introductory media, college information and college search, as well as articulation/transfer information. A searchable database includes information on every college in the country with provision for their transfer policies and agreements. CollegeStepz is now accessible on the web at www.collegestepz.net (soon to be .edu). Eventually, with sufficient funding, CollegeStepz will embrace major new components for comprehensive articulation/transfer processes, online communications with advisors, educational planning and career planning, financial aid, and student-progress tracking.

All of this work, promoting new transfer policies and practices through articulation-transfer councils and using the web for student success, is currently in operation at five regional pilot sites—in Atlanta, Baltimore/Washington, Houston, San Antonio, and San Francisco—with additional pilots expected to be underway this summer.

What is Needed?

In the beginning of this testimony, I suggested that we can and will improve transfer and articulation in higher education. Now, let me say, in closing, what is required. There is no question that higher education needs Congressional support for a national effort. But we need the encouragement to do it on a voluntary, good faith basis, not on a mandatory basis and certainly not with burdensome reporting requirements. Colleges and universities are getting the message and demonstrating their support for the kind of engagement that NATN offers, as evidenced by the participation of the three largest associations (ACE, AACC, AASCU), associations that represent over 400 minority serving institutions (HACU, NAFEO, and AIHEC), and the recent partnership agreement between NATN and the network of the Servicemembers’ Opportunity Colleges and CONAP Institutions (1800 post-secondary institutions). We need to encourage, support and allow this grass roots, voluntary approach to prove that higher education can and will get the job done. I would suggest, therefore, in conjunction with the re-authorization of the Higher Education Act, the adoption of a national goal to significantly increase the numbers of students successfully transferring their degrees and accelerating baccalaureate degree completion, especially students of color,...through voluntary compliance and commitment. The National Articulation and Transfer Network stands ready, with your support and commitment, to help facilitate the achievement of that goal.

Chairman MCKEON. Thank you.
Dr. Zimpher.

**STATEMENT OF DR. NANCY L. ZIMPER, PRESIDENT,
UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI, CINCINNATI, OH**

Dr. ZIMPER. Thank you, Chairman McKeon, Congressman Kildee, Members of the Subcommittee, Ohio Members Boehner, Tiberi and Ryan, and I want to thank especially State Representative Shawn Webster back in Ohio for the leadership he has provided in the model we are going to discuss on credit transfer policies in Ohio.

Ohio has made significant changes in its transfer and articulation policies, changes that will make the transition from high school to college seamless and provide many more options for students to be successful. Thinking ahead, 3 years to 2008, a sample scenario provides a more concrete way to illustrate the impact of Ohio's changes.

Latoya is a high school junior attending Cincinnati public schools. She is thinking about majoring in nursing, and thanks to Ohio's academic content standards, she has already taken algebra I and II and geometry, good advice from her guidance counselor for a career in nursing.

As a first-generation college student, she is a little unsure what she needs to do to get ready for college, but in Ohio, Latoya has a plan. She goes to Ohio's New Student Portal, a Web-based access point for information about college requirements, cost, application, financial aid materials.

Her guidance counselor suggests that she might want to look at the courses on the student portal about nursing, which we call Ohio's New Transfer Assurance Guide, not only in nursing but in 38 career pathways, where students can identify the courses they need to take, both in high school and in college, to become, say, a nurse.

She also learns from this portal what she can take in high school that will feed her major, and she can do so through Ohio's post-secondary enrollment option without paying additional fees for courses that she takes in high school that feed her major.

After high school graduation, Latoya decides she wants to start her college study in a local community college, in this case Cincinnati State Community and Technical College. There she can stay home, get acclimated to college, take courses at a very affordable price and make progress on gen-ed and nursing degree requirements. She knows that she can choose courses, including courses in nursing, that are guaranteed for transfer. She plans to transfer after 2 years to the University of Cincinnati. Good idea. But this will give her a very affordable way to begin her degree.

So Latoya submits her electronic portfolio of high school and college post-secondary classes to Cincinnati State via the State's newly christened electronic clearinghouse for transcript transfer. Cincinnati State evaluates her portfolio of courses and applies the appropriate credit to her college transcript.

She begins taking her gen-ed courses and her foundation courses for nursing, which she found in Ohio's Transfer Assurance Guide. She knows that she has the State's guarantee that her courses will transfer, and, when the time comes, her college transcript is transmitted electronically to UC.

For Latoya, the process is easy. The State has made her transfer of courses as simple as accessing her account with her college ATM card. She knows her educational account balance and can plan accordingly. She can focus on her courses, not on filling out forms and standing in line.

This is a win-win for students, for our colleges and universities and for our State. The students can plan a seamless pathway from high school to college. Campuses get more prepared students, mak-

ing progress to degree, and the State gets a highly trained workforce.

This is a wonderful scenario. We are more than 60 percent of the way there through our Ohio Transfer Module, through these transfer assurance guides and through the use of our course applicability system.

As you might guess, this elegantly simple articulation and transfer process did not evolve overnight. Building on our original Ohio transfer module concept, public policymakers in Ohio raised the bar significantly 2 years ago through House Bill 95, mandating the removal of any remaining barriers to Ohio's articulation transfer policies.

To meet this challenge, Ohio engaged all of its presidents, provosts and significant academic administrators at our 37 2- and 4-year public institutions and invited representatives from our private 4-year colleges to participate. We convened over 50 committees, composed of campus leaders and over 400 faculty members. Countless volunteers reviewed courses and curricular activities.

In the fall of 2005, now, all students in Ohio public post-secondary systems will be able to access this remarkable set of transfer guides. Thanks to our Ohio Higher Education Information System, all public 2- and 4-year institutions will have electronic transcripts by 2006. By 2007, all Ohio college-bound students will be using their very own ATM card, college access card, to ensure full access to Ohio's transfer guarantee.

Obviously, this Subcommittee has recognized that what works in Ohio just might work for the Nation. We hope our efforts serve not only as a model for others, but underscore the complex mixture of academic decisionmaking and faculty seat time, bolstered by a very sophisticated data system that is today making the dream of transferability a reality in Ohio.

I thank you for your interest and would be happy to answer questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Zimpher follows:]

**Statement of Nancy L. Zimpher, President, University of Cincinnati,
Cincinnati, OH**

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Kildee, and Members of the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, thank you for this opportunity to describe a statewide initiative that will, I believe, provide a model for discussion during this hearing on credit transfer policies. My name is Nancy Zimpher. I'm President of the University of Cincinnati and Co-chair of Ohio's Articulation and Transfer Advisory Council of the Ohio Board of Regents.

Ohio has made significant strides forward in ensuring that students have easy access to all the resources of the state's comprehensive system of public colleges and universities. Like many other states, we have grappled with very difficult conceptual, educational and logistical issues in developing a new policy for statewide transfer. Ohio's model for transfer and articulation might serve as a useful resource to other states challenged by similar issues. Students are very mobile. Consequently, the opportunity to easily transfer courses among campuses is a foundation for improving student access and success in college. Educational access is critical, especially in a state like Ohio, with its diverse education system. Therefore, Ohio needed to consider all the various dimensions of access: affordability, availability, aspiration, and academic preparation.

Ohio is a state that needs to increase the college education level of its citizens to meet the needs of the knowledge economy and provide the workforce of the future. In today's economy, it is increasingly clear that learning must extend beyond high school. New knowledge is being created at unprecedented rates and innovative technologies are transforming old jobs and creating new ones. Being ranked 39th

in the nation for the percentage of its population with a bachelor's degree doesn't bode well for the future of Ohio. We must seize on every opportunity to increase the college participation of our citizens and remove barriers that inhibit the mobility of students throughout the higher education system.

Background

Ohio's articulation and transfer system is elegantly simple in concept. Students will now be able to begin a course of study at any college or university in Ohio and be guaranteed that significant credits will transfer and apply to degree requirements statewide. The policy places students squarely in the center of the educational system. Further, since students make educational choices based upon convenience, cost, interest, location, program availability and other such factors, Ohio's new system removes barriers to these choices.

Ohio has actually been in the business of articulation and transfer for 15 years. The first phase of the Articulation and Transfer Policy, established in 1990, was a major achievement for the state at that time. It improved the mobility of students by developing a foundational concept: the Ohio Transfer Module. Students taking a complete module of 36–40 semester hours or 54–60 quarter credit hours comprised of general education courses like English, math, and biology were guaranteed that these courses would transfer statewide and take the place of the module at the receiving institution. To ensure comparability of courses across institutions, a statewide faculty committee reviewed each course's level and rigor within the module.

We encountered a few difficulties. Students often just take courses, not full modules. Consequently, if students didn't complete the entire transfer module, they lost the ability to transfer courses. The full intent of Ohio's transfer and articulation policy was not being maximized in a way that would significantly provide students access and success in college.

We began designing the next phase of the transfer and articulation process a little over two years ago. Our work coincided with a legislative mandate to fix any barriers and challenges that students might be experiencing in the transfer of coursework. The General Assembly gave us an aggressive time line to complete this work (April 15, 2005) and the flexibility to design the best strategy. We met the deadline. The final report is written, and we are into full-scale implementation. Students enrolled this coming fall will have a statewide transfer guarantee that ensures they can make progress in one of 38 different baccalaureate degree pathways, anywhere within the public higher education system and in Ohio's participating private institutions.

Ohio's Revised Policy

A few basic guiding principles framed Ohio's effort to revise its transfer and articulation policy. Student success was the central focus of the policy, rather than convenience to the state or campuses. Students can expect fair treatment in the transfer and application of credits to major/degree requirements and will be considered the same as any student beginning or ending college on the same campus, what some have called "native" students. Campus missions are preserved: community colleges continue to focus on access to college, workforce training, and programs offered at the associate degree level. The public and private universities are the primary providers of baccalaureate education. Finally, campus authority and autonomy is maintained. Presidents, provosts and more than 300 faculty provided leadership for the development of the new policy. While the Board of Regents and the General Assembly were the driving force behind the initiative, the Articulation and Transfer Advisory Council was a critical entity in establishing the framework for the policy, one that would work for Ohio's campuses and students.

With one significant change, the Ohio Transfer Module continues to be the foundation of the transfer and articulation process. Students will now be guaranteed the transfer of individual courses from the general education module, without the need to complete the entire module. A faculty subcommittee will continue to review courses for rigor, level and appropriateness as part of the on-going process.

At the heart of Ohio's revised approach to articulation and transfer is a new concept, the Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG). Transfer Assurance Guides have been developed in 38 degree pathways for students in eight disciplines/professions: arts and humanities, business, communications, education, health, mathematics and science, engineering and engineering technologies, and social sciences (see appendix A for a list of disciplines). These pathways build on the general education core by identifying major and pre-major courses that are also guaranteed to transfer and apply to requirements anywhere in the system. The Transfer Assurance Guide also becomes a primary vehicle for advising students, even before the student leaves high school; another building block to a truly seamless P–16 system in Ohio. This

initiative will fundamentally change how transfer and application of credits will occur in Ohio and builds upon a decade and a half of work on improving transfer.

Each TAG represents a specific pathway such as nursing, mathematics, engineering, education, sociology or business. Under the direction of the Ohio Board of Regents, 38 teams of faculty from two- and four-year colleges and universities were brought together for each Transfer Assurance Guide. Over a series of meetings, the teams identified courses for each TAG and developed learning outcomes for each course. The learning outcomes are the mechanism to ensure rigor, quality and equivalency of courses across the system.

Campus leaders reviewed the Transfer Assurance Guides on multiple occasions, provided comments back to the faculty panels, and ultimately agreed to abide by the guaranteed transfer of courses in the TAGs. This, as you may imagine, was not an easy process and many compromises were made to arrive at final agreement on the course content of each TAG (see appendix B for sample TAGs). Panels also made recommendations of courses within the general education module that will help students make appropriate choices for their intended major.

While the TAGs are relatively simple in concept, the results are truly impressive. They represent a guarantee to students of academic pathways to majors that ensure improved advising and a certainty of course transfer and, more importantly, application of courses to the major and degree. They remove barriers to transfer and allow for student mobility across the system while ensuring the quality of the educational experience through regular review by the faculty subcommittee. Students that select courses in the TAG will know that they will transfer, and they will not need to repeat the course at another college or university, thus maximizing both student and campus resources.

Implementation

The logistics of implementing such a comprehensive system of transfer are complex. The Ohio Board of Regents is fortunate to have a world class information system, the Higher Education Information (HEI) system, as the backbone for electronic implementation. Using the course titles and learning outcomes in each Transfer Assurance Guide, campuses will identify equivalent courses and report them to HEI in order to produce a statewide matrix of course matches. This course matrix will be shared with all campuses and serve as the universal course equivalency index for the state higher education system. The universal course equivalency system will make it possible for colleges and universities to guarantee that courses offered at different campuses are equivalent and transferable for credit and to meet major/degree requirements. By August 31, 2005, all campuses will have submitted information on applicable courses in each TAG. Beginning in autumn term 2005, students will be able to complete courses and be guaranteed transfer and articulation to degree requirements should they elect to transfer in the winter of 2006.

We envision, however, a much more sophisticated transfer of information through the development of a statewide Clearinghouse (Hub) for the instant electronic transfer of transcripts between campuses, both sending and receiving (see appendix C for a diagram). Students will benefit from this system that has the speed and accuracy to process very complicated data, and potentially many courses from a variety of institutions. Campuses will benefit with greater efficiency through creating a "one-stop shop" for processing the TAGs and transcripts. We will also be able to develop a statewide application process with the capacity to process high school transcripts in addition to college transcripts. The Clearinghouse will offer students access to a full array of electronic resources to assist them in reaching their ultimate educational goal.

Ohio is also fortunate to have invested in the development of an electronic, web-based advising tool to assist students and advisors in transfer. This electronic advising/transfer tool, the Course Applicability System (CAS), provides students and potential students an efficient way to see how courses transfer across the system and how the credits apply to a degree. All public campuses have implemented CAS as an advising tool for use by advisors and students.

Ongoing Agenda

The Ohio Board of Regents envisions that with the full development of the transcript clearinghouse, students will eventually have access to a seamless electronic system for college application and transfer, P-16. This will include an even greater electronic access to employment, career, college and financial aid information. We will also be developing more pathways (TAGs) in the future. The focus on learning outcomes provides us with the opportunity to broaden our thinking about education and include other models of how students learn and demonstrate mastery of concepts (i.e. internships and field experiences, portfolio based learning, interdiscipli-

nary experiences). The notion of describing specific levels of learning mastery is a major paradigm shift and will more closely mirror the mastery of learning that students will need to exhibit in actual work settings, thus providing an opportunity to make learning more transferable and integrated.

Conclusion

Ohio is implementing systemic change through one of the most comprehensive and expansive curricular reforms in the state's higher education history. Students will have the benefit of stronger and more informed advising and will have options available that meet specific needs (cost, location, etc.). They also will gain state assurance that a consistent level of quality and rigor is maintained, backed by the state's guarantee for the transfer and application of credits to degrees. Ohio will have the benefit of a better and more effectively prepared workforce. State resources will be more efficiently and effectively deployed, and the success of the policy will be easy to assess. We have put the student in the driver's seat in transfer and have provided the tools to navigate the education system to his or her highest educational aspirations.

Ohio's significantly enhanced articulation and transfer policies and processes will substantially increase opportunities for students to be successful in attaining educational goals. The full implementation of the policy is a critical element of Ohio's efforts to improve educational access and success and, in turn, begin to bridge the gap of low educational attainment. These strategies are critical in meeting the needs of the knowledge economy and the workforce of the future.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to any questions you may have.

[Attachments to Dr. Zimpher's statement follow:]

Appendix A

Key Disciplines

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><u>1. Arts & Humanities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art History - Dance - English Literature - Fine Arts - Music - Philosophy - Theatre | <p><u>2. Social and Behavioral Sciences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anthropology - Economics - Geography - History - Political Science - Psychology - Sociology |
| <p><u>3. Education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional Education Module - Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for Middle School Math - Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for Middle School Science - Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for AYA Math - Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for AYA Science - Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for Intervention Specialist | |
| <p><u>4. Engineering & Engineering Technology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aerospace, Agriculture, Civil, Mechanical Engineering - Bioengineering, Biomedical Engineering - Chemical, Environmental Engineering - Computer, Electrical Engineering - Industrial Engineering - Bachelor of Science in Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Electrical Engineering o Mechanical Engineering o Construction Engineering o Industrial - Bachelor of Science in Construction Management - Bachelor of Individualized Studies - Baccalaureate in Organizational Leadership - | <p><u>5. Science and Mathematics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biology - Chemistry - Geology - Mathematics - Physics <p><u>6. Health</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dietetics - Health Information Management - Medical Laboratory - Nursing |
| <p><u>7. Business</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business | <p><u>8. Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication Studies - Journalism - Public Relations & Advertising - Telecommunication |

Appendix B
NURSING TRANSFER ASSURANCE GUIDE (TAG) March 23, 2005

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Ohio Transfer Module: Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) Requirements: 36-40 semester hours / 54-60 quarter hours. Students should select courses within the OTM that complement the selected major and meet any specific general education requirements. Students are encouraged to complete the OTM to ensure maximum transferability and application of credits.</p> | |
| <p>Required Disciplines</p> <p>Area I. English Composition Area II. Mathematics Area III. Arts & Humanities Area IV. Social Sciences Area V. Natural & Physical Science</p> | <p>Minimum Required Hours</p> <p>3 sem. / 5-6 qtr. 3 sem. / 3 qtr. 6 sem. / 9 qtr. 6 sem. / 9 qtr.</p> <p>Recommended Courses</p> <p>Statistics Introduction/General Psychology and Introduction to Sociology Microbiology w/ lab Anatomy w/lab Physiology</p> |
| <p>Advising Notes: While chemistry is required by all BSN programs at public universities in Ohio, the amount and type varies among institutions. Students should check with the receiving institution for specific requirements and type and amounts of chemistry required.</p> | |
| <p>2. Major Courses</p> | |
| <p>a. Foundations – Health and Assessment Skills</p> <p>Advising Notes: Some schools teach skills beyond those listed and may require students who transfer to complete independent study to develop competency in additional skills.</p> | |
| <p>b. Maternal Child</p> <p>Advising Notes: Students are responsible for contacting the receiving institution to discern whether additional instructional modules will be necessary in order to meet all of the stated competencies.</p> | |
| <p>c. Adult Health /Gerontology</p> <p>Advising Notes: Students are responsible for contacting the receiving institution to discern whether additional instructional modules will be necessary in order to meet all of the stated competencies.</p> | |
| <p>Transfer Assurance Guide Total Guaranteed Credits (Maximum)</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ohio Transfer Module • Pre-major/Major | <p>36 - 40 sem. 0 - 25 sem.</p> |
| | <p>54 - 60 qtr. 0 - 32 to 36 qtr.</p> |

Institutional Requirements: For entrance and graduation, a transfer student must meet all institutional requirements which would include, but may not be limited to: minimum grade point average, residency requirements, upper division credits attained, minimum grades in specific courses, performance requirements (ex. dance, music) and other requirements of native students from the same institution.

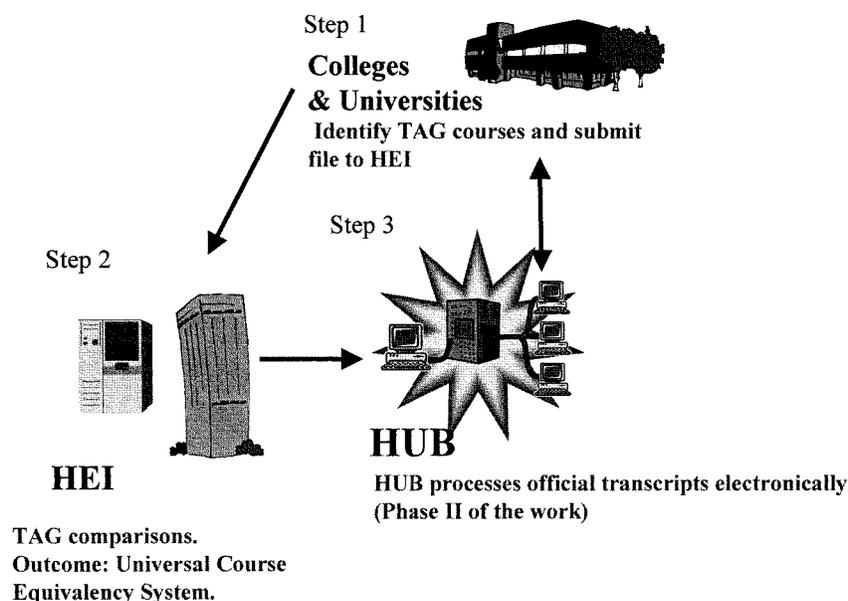
MATHEMATICS TRANSFER ASSURANCE GUIDE (TAG) March 4, 2005

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| <p>2. Ohio Transfer Module: Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) Requirements: 36-40 semester hours / 54-60 quarter hours. Students should select courses within the OTM that complement the selected major and meet any specific general education requirements. Students are encouraged to complete the OTM to ensure maximum transferability and application of credits.</p> | | |
| Required Disciplines | Minimum Required Hours | Recommended Courses |
| Area I. English Composition | 3 sem. / 5-6 qtr. | Calculus I & II Calculus-based Physics I & II w/lab |
| Area II. Mathematics | 3 sem. / 3 qtr. | |
| Area III. Arts & Humanities | 6 sem. / 9 qtr. | |
| Area IV. Social Sciences | 6 sem. / 9 qtr. | |
| Area V. Natural & Physical Science | 6 sem. / 9 qtr. | |
| <p>Additional courses beyond the minimum required hours, from any of the disciplines listed above, will count toward the completion of the OTM (36-40 semester hours or 54-60 quarter hours).</p> | | |
| <p>3. Foreign Language - Demonstrate competencies through the 200 level. Credits: Up to 16 semester hours / 24 quarter hours.</p> | | |
| <p>4. Major Courses</p> | | |
| <p>a. Calculus III</p> | | |
| <p>Advising Notes:</p> | | |
| <p>b. Elementary Linear Algebra</p> | | |
| <p>Advising Notes:</p> | | |
| <p>c. Elementary Differential Equations</p> | | |
| <p>Advising Notes:</p> | | |
| <p>Transfer Assurance Guides Total Guaranteed Credits (Maximum)</p> | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ohio Transfer Module | | 36 – 40 sem. 0 – 16 sem. 0- 9 to 12 sem. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign Language | | 54 – 60 qtr. 0 – 24 qtr. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-major / Major | | 0 – 12 to 15 qtr. |

Institutional Requirements: For entrance and graduation, a transfer student must meet all institutional requirements which would include, but may not be limited to: minimum grade point average, residency requirements, upper division credits attained, minimum grades in specific courses, performance requirements (ex. dance, music) and other requirements of native students from the same institution.

Appendix C

Overview of HUB Process



Chairman MCKEON. Thank you very much.
Dr. Klebacha.

STATEMENT OF DR. THERESA A. KLEBACHA, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TALLAHASSEE, FL

Dr. KLEBACHA. Good morning, Chairman McKeon, Congressman Kildee and Members of the Committee.

My name is Theresa Klebacha, and, as the Chairman mentioned, I am the Director of Strategic Initiatives for the Florida Department of Education under Commissioner John Winn. Thank you for inviting me to share with you Florida's achievements in student transfer and success. In honoring my time limit, I would like to dedicate my 5 minutes to making three points about Florida's Pathways to Success.

One, it is all about the student. Florida's education mission is very simple: Improve student learning and achievement. We do this by striving to meet four goals: One, maximize student achievement; two, provide access opportunities and move students seamlessly across and between systems; three, support academic programs that contribute to a skilled workforce and economic development; and four, do all this in a way that both maximizes both taxpayer dollars and student return on investment. Our focus on the student has been fundamental to our policies in Florida for decades.

The second point about our Pathways to Success, an effective transfer system requires a comprehensive approach. Florida has a comprehensive articulation infrastructure that supports movement of students through the system down to the basic course level. We have several mechanisms in place that make this happen.

First, we support a two-plus-two system, where the first 2 years of a community college associate degree coursework is guaranteed transfer to a State University. There, the second 2 years build toward a bachelor's degree for that student. Our statewide articulation agreement guarantees the transfer of credit without requiring students to repeat courses.

The second mechanism we have is that we engage practitioners from the field to provide State level approval of common prerequisites, in other words, major core curriculum, those course requirements for all bachelor degree programs. These courses are also guaranteed transfer among institutions into a degree program. This allows the students to know ahead of time what courses are required in their desired field, and they can plan their programs of study using our unique online student advising system.

Our third mechanism is that we support a course numbering system that is the building block of our guaranteed transfer policy. Our State practitioner group engages faculty discipline committees to assign course numbers based on course content and faculty credentials. This system is what makes it possible for students to transfer credit effortlessly as they move among institutions.

To top it all off, in Florida, we put money behind student program completion, transfer to higher academic levels or placement into a job. This performance funding inspires institutions to focus on outcomes of moving students through and out, rather than loading student seats up front.

The third point that I would like to make about our Pathways to Success is that, if you build it, they will come. In other words, what I mean by that is it is not just about public education. Our independent institutions recognize the benefits of a system for students, and they also participate. They have seats on our State level practitioner group that makes decisions. They participate in our online student advising system. They, too, have their own two-plus-two articulation agreement with our community colleges. And they participate in our common course numbering system to guarantee the transfer of their credit to our other institutions. Proprietary schools, in particular, are very interested in and are taking advantage of this opportunity.

The independent institutions do all this voluntarily in Florida. They see the benefit of advertising the guaranteed transfer of credit for their students.

In closing, I will summarize Florida's three keys to success: One, focus on what is best for students; two, take a comprehensive outcome-based approach to transfer policy; and three, create mechanisms that invite and engage both public and private involvement.

I applaud your desire to make it possible for any student in the Nation to experience the same rights and benefits that Florida students already have.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members, for allowing me, on behalf of Florida, to be a part of your conversation. I welcome your comments and questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Klebacha follows:]

**Testimony of Dr. Theresa A. Klebacha, Director of Strategic Initiatives,
Florida Department of Education, Tallahassee, FL**

Chairman McKeon, Congressman Kildee, and Members of the Committee:

Good morning. My name is Theresa Klebacha, and I am the Director of Strategic Initiatives for the Florida Department of Education under Commissioner John Winn. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to share with you Florida's advances and achievements in student articulation and success.

With 55.4% in 2002, Florida ranked 27th in the percentage of public high school students continuing into some level of postsecondary education immediately after graduation. Our state has been recognized as a nationwide leader in creating a "seamless" transfer process for these students. In fact, more than 70% of community college Associate in Arts (AA) degree graduates in Florida now transfer to four-year institutions and pursue bachelor's degrees within five years of completing the AA.

Florida supports a vision of highest possible achievement for all students.

In 2001, Florida moved to a K–20 education system, identifying improving student learning and achievement across public and private education systems as the primary mission. This mission, as established in law, requires specific attention be directed to meeting four statewide goals:

1. Highest Student Achievement
2. Seamless Articulation & Maximum Access
3. Skilled Workforce & Economic Development
4. Quality Efficient Services

This morning I will focus my attention on Florida's efforts at meeting the goal of Seamless Articulation and Maximum Access. In particular, I will overview our policies and practices, and spend some time addressing how these policies maximize a student's ability to move seamlessly within and between both public and private institutions. Rather than read to you, I will paraphrase my comments and welcome your questions at the end.

Florida strives to maximize students' movement through and across systems.

Basic to efficient and effective articulation is the appropriate alignment of curriculum and testing standards for K–20. This means mechanisms must be in place to ensure that every student is prepared for the next level of instruction before being promoted. An ultimate goal is to ensure that graduation from high school means a student is ready for college level work, without the need for remediation. Students must first be provided access to quality instructional opportunities.

Florida ensures geographic access to postsecondary opportunities through its strategic placement of 11 state universities, 28 community colleges, and 38 vocational-technical and adult education centers. Additionally, Florida is home to 27 college and university members of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF), and over 600 proprietary institutional members of the Florida Association of Postsecondary Colleges and Schools. All are appropriately licensed for operation in the state.

Financial access to postsecondary education is provided through state operational support that is balanced with a variety of student financial aid options. This aid may be in the form of grants, loans, scholarships, and/or various forms of employment. Financial aid can come from several sources and agencies including the federal government, the State of Florida, the colleges and universities, and private organizations.

While access is an important component to ensuring student advancement, Florida recognizes that equally as important is the ability of the student to move across and within systems as transparently and efficiently as possible.

Florida has a comprehensive articulation policy infrastructure.

Decades of legislative and policy decisions have contributed to Florida's comprehensive articulation infrastructure. Unlike other popular priorities that are implemented one policy direction at a time, much care has been taken in Florida to create and nurture an entire infrastructure of policies and practices that link and build into a comprehensive articulation plan. The strength of the plan is its recognition of the nature of student movement through postsecondary education in Florida.

Many Florida students begin their college education at one of Florida's open admissions community colleges, but plan to pursue a bachelor's degree at one of Florida's public or independent four-year colleges or universities. Currently, more than half of the juniors and seniors in the State University System, as well as many students attending independent four-year colleges and universities, began their postsecondary work at a community college.

Florida supports a "2+2" system of student advancement.

The Associate in Arts (AA) degree is designed for students who intend to earn a bachelor's degree from a four-year college or university. The AA degree program meets general education requirements as well as common prerequisites for a student's intended major. The degree requires 60 semester credit hours and ensures admission to a Florida public university.

Florida law provides for a Statewide Articulation Agreement that ensures a seamless transfer process between and among postsecondary institutions. This agreement ensures that if a student completes an AA degree, admission to the State University System is guaranteed. During the student's enrollment as a junior and senior at the university, the student will not be required to repeat courses already satisfactorily completed. It protects the transfer of equivalent courses and the general education program completed by students during the freshman and sophomore years at Florida public community colleges.

Additionally, state law requires all bachelor degree programs be restricted to 120 semester credit hours in length, unless otherwise approved at the state level, therefore ensuring that half of the degree can be met through the AA lower-division work. These common program lengths are intended to minimize the number of hours required for a student to earn a degree while ensuring the quality of the educational program.

The general education "core" is guaranteed transfer.

The Statewide Articulation Agreement also addresses the transfer of general education coursework. The state's 36-hour general education program is designed to introduce college and university students to the fundamental knowledge, skills, and values that are essential to the study of academic disciplines. General education requirements include courses within the subject areas of communications, mathematics, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The agreement stipulates that public universities and participating ICUF institutions cannot require students to take additional general education courses if they have already successfully completed a general education sequence at a community college.

Common prerequisites are identified, published and guaranteed transfer.

Although completion of a community college AA degree guarantees admission into the State University System, admission to a specified program at a given university may not be guaranteed, particularly if prerequisite courses were not completed by the student. Prerequisite courses are required lower-division courses students must successfully complete for a specific bachelor's degree. To assist students in planning for transfer to desired degree programs, the state requires identification and approval of "common" prerequisites across program areas. Common prerequisite courses have been identified for more than 600 university bachelor's degrees across all public institutions. Since Fall of 1996, common prerequisites have been offered and accepted by state universities and community colleges.

Common course numbering makes the statewide guaranteed transfer of credit possible.

Florida's Statewide Course Numbering System establishes the "building block" mechanism that allows the articulation infrastructure to function. The system facilitates the transfer of coursework by classifying courses according to subject matter and faculty credentials, as assigned by one of 166 faculty discipline committee coordinators. There are currently over 100,000 active courses in the system. All public universities, community colleges, and postsecondary vocational-technical centers are required to participate. Private postsecondary institutions may volunteer to participate in this numbering system for a fee established in rule.

According to Florida law, an institution accepting a transfer student from another participating institution must award credit for satisfactorily completed courses which are equivalent to courses offered by the receiving institution, including consideration of faculty credentials. Credits awarded must satisfy the requirements of the receiving institution on the same basis as credits awarded to native students. The credit awarded must be as though the course was taken at the receiving institution.

Several “best practices” keep the articulation policy focused and refined.

The Articulation Coordinating Committee represents the involvement of practitioners.

To help coordinate this transfer process, representatives from various public and private educational sectors meet regularly as the statewide Articulation Coordinating Committee. This Committee was formed in the early 1970s to discuss ways to help students move easily from institution to institution and from one level of education to the next. Primary responsibilities include approving common prerequisites across program areas, approving course and credit-by-exam equivalencies, overseeing implementation of local articulation agreements, and recommending articulation policy changes.

Institutions are “rewarded” for student advancement and progress.

In the late 1990’s, Florida implemented performance funding structures that “paid” institutions for student completion of programs, continuous enrollment in higher learning, placement into a job, and retention in a job. Implemented primarily in the workforce and community college systems, the performance payment system resulted in the streamlining of programs and alignment of resources to support student advancement through the systems rather than payment for getting students into the programs (a.k.a., “seat time” funding). As institutions were funded based on student advancement, they sought and supported partnerships with employers and public and private institutions.

Online student academic advising provides information and guidance to citizens.

In 1995, Florida created the Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students (FACTS) system as its central web resource for postsecondary education advising. “FACTS.org” is available to assist users in determining career objectives, choosing the major and institutions that are best suited for them, applying for admission and financial aid online, and tracking their progress toward a degree or certificate. Students can also plan their courses and access their grades and transcripts online. “FACTS.org” is the official repository for several manuals and documents related to student advising and articulation. This includes counseling handbooks, a common prerequisite manual, a statewide articulation manual, the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida Articulation Agreement, Credit-by-Exam Guidelines, Acceleration Mechanism Options, and a High School Planner. Florida is expanding “FACTS.org” to provide degree auditing functions to high school students that wish to plan their high school curricula in preparation for course requirements in desired postsecondary programs of study.

I would like to conclude my remarks by speaking briefly about the involvement of Florida’s independent postsecondary institutions in our statewide articulation efforts.

Florida embraces its partnership with independent postsecondary institutions.

In addition to providing independent postsecondary institutions with state financial aid funding for student enrollment, representation on the Articulation Coordinating Committee, and participation in Florida’s online student advising system (“FACTS.org”), there are two primary ways these institutions play an integral role in the articulation of Florida students.

One primary mechanism of independent involvement is through a statewide articulation agreement, signed by the State of Florida and the ICUF organization, to establish provisions for the transfer of Associate in Arts degree students into private colleges and universities. The Agreement guarantees that community college AA degree students will enter as juniors, receive 60 credit hours toward their bachelor’s degree, and receive recognition of the general education core courses taken at the community college. As regionally-accredited institutions, the transfer of credit is already guaranteed, but the agreement focuses on the transfer within degree programs. Most of the ICUF institutions have volunteered to recognize this agreement.

A second, potentially more expanding role involves integration of independent institutions into the mechanics of the articulation process. In 1998, Florida law was amended to allow independent colleges and schools, that are fully accredited by a regional or national accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education and are licensed to practice in Florida, to participate in the Statewide Course Numbering System. Of the 100,000 active courses, currently there are over 3,000 courses from 32 participating independent institutions in the system. Of these, over 1,800 are automatically transferable to at least one institution’s AA or bachelor’s degree program. For a fee, proprietary institutions choose to participate

in the system as a way to ensure students that credits earned will be accepted upon transfer to any other participating institution.

In conclusion, Florida is poised to assist as needed.

I am very proud to report that Florida's comprehensive approach to "Seamless Articulation and Maximum Access" continues to support policy innovation and student achievement. With these mechanisms, Florida has been successful in maximizing the state's and Florida families' return on investment for dollars invested in postsecondary education.

I applaud your efforts to strengthen policies on a national level to facilitate student movement; to put policies in place that do not require a student or taxpayer to pay twice for the same instruction; and to do it in a way that does not jeopardize the quality and integrity of instructional programs.

Thank you for allowing me, on behalf of Florida, to play a small part. I welcome any and all of your comments and questions.

Chairman McKEON. Thank you very much.
Mr. Sullivan.

**STATEMENT OF JEROME H. SULLIVAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND
ADMISSIONS OFFICERS, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. SULLIVAN. Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Mr. Kildee, Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Jerry Sullivan, and I am the Executive Director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. I am very honored to be here today.

AACRAO is a nonprofit association of more than 2,400 institutions of higher education and approximately 10,000 campus enrollment service officials. As a national organization of transfer of credit administrators who both send and receive students, AACRAO is in a unique position to address this hearing's topic. We recognize both great successes and challenges in the current state of transfer and portability of credit.

Transfer and articulation are complex phenomena involving planned and unplanned movements of students among institutions of higher education. The fundamental challenge with transfer, whether planned or unplanned, is to aggregate coursework conducted at different institutions with different academic policies, different curricula and different levels of expected rigor.

The institutional transfer process is complex and deliberate, typically involving transfer professionals and the faculty. It requires in-depth analysis of every course entry on the transcript. Credit evaluation involves three distinct judgments: First, an assessment of the quality of the course; second, an evaluation of its comparability to courses at the receiving institution; and finally, the course work must be determined to be applicable to the program of study for which the student has applied. The three-pronged standard benefits students by ensuring they are not inappropriately placed in courses for which they are ill-prepared.

Variations in institutional resources and staff complicate credit evaluation. At many institutions, evaluations are captured in course equivalency data bases that are available to evaluators as a means of expediting the process. At most institutions, however, the process is entirely manual and is driven by the experience and the knowledge of evaluators.

At the State level, numerous efforts are underway to promote transfer. States have employed various approaches, ranging from informal efforts of transfer professionals that try to do right by the student to more formal institution-based agreements to State-mandated policies. Today, nearly every State has some policy on the transfer of credit.

For students moving from 2- to 4-year institutions, the States in general make tremendous efforts at setting up articulation mechanisms, including Web sites that can be easily accessed by students, parents and counselors.

There are many nongovernmental national efforts in place to supplement institution-to-institution and State articulated policies. Since 1977, AACRAO, for example, has maintained a data base of institutional transfer credit practices. We are currently engaged in a major effort to expand this data base for use by institutions.

Since 1978, we have maintained an agreement with the American Council of Education and the accreditation community called the Joint Statement on Transfer and the Award of Credit.

I want to recognize the contributions of my fellow panelists for their efforts to streamline transfer. The National Articulation and Transfer Network, with which AACRAO is pleased to be associated, is an important resource and model. In Ohio, the development and implementation of the Degree Ordered Reporting System, DARS, and Course Applicability System, CAS, have proven effective at streamlining equivalencies and portability.

Inefficiencies in the system: Well, while institutional and State systems for transfer credit are largely successful, we know that the system can be improved. The challenge is to understand how credit determinations are made, how they are made erroneously from time to time, and how to improve that process.

Effective State policies are at the heart of programmatic success and degree attainment for transfer students. We believe that Federal policy could supplement these efforts, however, and I would like to offer a few suggestions.

Federal transfer policies should be based on assumptions that encourage students to matriculate toward degree completion, that maintain a balance between public benefit and administrative burden and that continue to recognize the institutional economy of curricula and degree requirements. Policies should not be one-size-fits-all.

First, the Federal Government could facilitate volunteer data collection to provide receiving institutions with more detailed information about courses for which credit is sought by incoming transfer applicants. One possible information collection dissemination mechanism for the effort could be the College Opportunities Online Portal of the U.S. Department of Education's Web site.

Another possible portal for submission of course information would be the CollegeStepz web site, operated under the auspices of the National Articulation and Transfer Network. Such a site would voluntarily collect information, like institutional course inventories, catalog descriptions, syllabi, textbooks and faculty qualifications. This national information repository would not only help credit evaluators, it would help students.

Second, Federal policymakers should consider a disclosure requirement for institutions that make claims with regard to transferability of their course work to other institutions. It appears that much of the student discontent about denials of transfer credit are based on claims made by sending institutions that turn out to be misleading.

Institutions that make claims about the transferability of their credits to other institutions should be required to provide the basis for the transferability claim, the number and types of articulation agreements in which the institution participates and the number of documented cases of successful transfer on a course-by-course basis.

Third, Congress could authorize a grant program to promote articulation agreements and increase degree attainment. Such grants could be awarded on a competitive basis to institutions to enable them to focus on improving transfer opportunities for traditional and nontraditional students. Additionally, the grants could promote articulation agreements amongst different institutions in order to improve the degree completion for incoming transfer students.

On behalf of the members of AACRAO, I want to thank you for consideration of our views, and look forward to answering questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sullivan follows:]

Statement of Jerome H. Sullivan, Executive Director, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, Washington, DC

Introduction

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Mr. Kildee, members of the committee, my name is Jerome H. Sullivan and I am Executive Director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. I am honored to have this opportunity to share the views of our members with the Subcommittee regarding the portability of academic credit and student mobility among institutions of higher education.

AACRAO is a nonprofit association of more than 2,400 institutions of higher education and more than 9,500 campus enrollment services officials. The campus officials who comprise our membership range from front-line staff to senior administrators with primary responsibility for admissions, enrollment planning, records management, administrative computing and other important operations and student services central to the smooth and efficient administration of colleges and universities. Our membership includes public and private non-profit institutions as well as for-profit collegiate institutions.

Today's hearing focuses on the portability of academic credit and whether transfer of academic credit policies can be improved. As a national organization of transfer of credit administrators who both send and receive transfer students, AACRAO is in a unique position to address this topic in terms of current practices among institutions, within individual states and across the nation. We recognize both great successes and challenges in the current state of transfer and portability of credit. On the one hand, American higher education is undoubtedly the most flexible and transfer-friendly system in the world. On the other hand, student mobility is not entirely without constraint, and carries costs for institutions and students. Clearly, the more these costs can be contained or eliminated, the more efficient and productive we collectively can become, and the more options students will have. I would like to briefly address the present state of affairs with regard to transfer and bring some of the pending initiatives on transfer to the Subcommittee's attention. Additionally, I'd like to offer a few solutions to ease credit portability and student mobility.

Transfer: A Complex Issue

Transfer and articulation are complex phenomena involving planned and unplanned movement of students among institutions of higher education. Planned transfers may be facilitated by carefully negotiated articulation agreements between

institutions, and enable students to start an academic program at one institution with the knowledge that they will continue their program and obtain their academic credential at another institution. It is important to note that not all planned transfers are based on such prior institutional arrangements, and that students may independently plan to transfer from one institution to another without informing their advisors or having complete knowledge of the credit-acceptance policies of the institution to which they intend to transfer. But of course, not all transfers are planned.

Beyond planned transfers, unanticipated factors and the general mobility of our society create numerous circumstances under which students must move from one institution to another without prior planning. Reasons for such movements can range from mismatches between students and institutions to geographic relocations by the families. The fundamental challenge with transfer, whether planned or unplanned, is to aggregate coursework conducted at different institutions with different academic policies, different curricula, and different levels of expected rigor into an academic credential that the issuing institution can stand behind. Transfer is complex, then, because disparate and sometimes incommensurable coursework is brought together, often without prior involvement of the institution from which the student expects to graduate.

Who Transfers?

Once it was assumed that transfer students were young people who, because they wanted to stay close to home for two years after high school—for financial reasons or reasons of convenience attended a local two-year “junior college” or “community college” before transferring to a four-year institution. Today, nearly 60 percent of community college students are over the age of 22. Sixteen percent of all community college students are in their thirties; 10 percent are in their forties; and 5 percent are in their fifties or older.

Transfer students are no longer only those who begin college at a two-year institution and then move to a four-year. There are “lateral transfers”—students who transfer from a two-year school to another two-year, or from a four-year school to another four-year. There are also “reverse transfers”—students who start at a four-year school but graduate from a two-year school. And, there are “swirling” transfers—students who are enrolled in two or more schools simultaneously. While it is still true that more students at two-year colleges transfer about 42 percent—than those at four-year institutions—about 23 percent one-third of college seniors have transferred at some time in their career.

The Institutional Transfer Process

To better appreciate the transfer process, it may be helpful to review the careful procedures institutions typically follow in handling transfer decisions. The admissions process for transfer students is significantly more complicated because beyond an evaluation of the applicant’s qualifications, separate determinations must be made about credit acceptance and placement of the student. The process of transfer credit evaluation typically involves transfer professionals and the faculty, and requires an in-depth analysis of every course-entry on the transcript. The credit evaluation process is abstractly divided into three distinct judgments. First, an assessment of the quality of the course must be made. Second, the course must be evaluated on the basis of its comparability to courses at the receiving institution. Finally, the coursework for which credit is granted must be determined to be applicable to the program of study for which the student has applied. For purposes of ensuring student success and protecting the integrity of academic credentials, all three judgments must be made in the affirmative for credit to be granted. Courses of poor quality, courses for which the receiving has no general counterpart, and courses that simply do not apply to the degree being sought should not, and are not, typically ported over. This standard benefits students by ensuring that they are not inappropriately placed in courses for which they are ill prepared.

Concrete determinations with regard to the three-part analysis described above can range in difficulty. Transfer professionals at institutions with significant transfers-in often have a course-by-course understanding of academic offerings of their feeder schools. This course-level understanding is typically arrived at through intensive reviews of course syllabi, textbooks and supplemental materials used in courses, knowledge of faculty and their qualifications at sending institutions, and lengthy consultations with departmental faculty at the receiving institution in connection with each course. Expensive and labor-intensive as it is, this process represents the ideal method of credit evaluation. The good news is that once a particular course from a specific institution has been evaluated, if it is encountered again on a different student’s transcript, the same credit decision can be applied

until the course content changes. At many institutions, evaluations are captured in course-equivalency databases that are available to evaluators as a means of expediting the process. At most institutions, however, the process is entirely manual, and is driven by the experience and knowledge of expert evaluators.

State and Institutional Initiatives on Transfer

No single model of articulation and transfer can be identified as the universal standard or even as the preferred model for the nation. Most states employ a combination of approaches ranging from informal efforts of transfer professionals that try to do right by the student, to more formal institution-based agreements, to state-mandated policies.

Historically, two- and four-year college transfer and articulation agreements were primarily institutional initiatives rather than state mandates. Now, nearly every state has some policy on transfer of credits for students moving from two- to four-year institutions. Striking differences have emerged, however, in articulation policies and practices among the states. These differences include not only how policies and practices were initially established, but also their degree of selectivity, specificity and uniformity.

Some widely used transfer practices are statewide articulation agreements, state-level transfer/articulation bodies, transfer/articulation officers located at both two- and four-year institutions, and feedback systems to determine whether state policies are being implemented. Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Washington, and Minnesota provide examples of state-level agencies that have been directed by their legislatures to establish policies relating to the flow of undergraduate students between and among the institutions they coordinate. The states, in general, are already making tremendous efforts at setting up articulation mechanisms, including Web sites that can easily be accessed by students, parents and counselors.

Vertical transfer (two- to four-year) is the type of transfer most often addressed in state transfer or articulation policies. State articulation policies are most likely to mandate transfer of general education or transfer of associate degrees, focus mainly on transfer among public institutions, and tend not to have an enforcement mechanism.

At least thirty-eight states have transfer/articulation legislation via statutes, bills or resolutions. Cooperative agreements comprising formal voluntary agreements between institutions and formulated on a course-by-course or per discipline basis exist in at least 40 states. Transfer data is collected in 33 states for reporting and accountability purposes. Eighteen states offer student transfer incentive programs, including financial aid, guaranteed transfer credit, and/or an admissions priority. Twenty-six states publish student guidelines to outline requirements and types of articulation agreements between institutions. Twenty-three states have a statewide common core curriculum and eight states have common course numbering for all institutions. Finally, at least five states have specialized vocational-technical credit transfer organized via collaborations between two-year colleges and vocational institutions.

Several common patterns are evident in the practices nationwide: First, despite changes in students' enrollment patterns, even the newer articulation and transfer policies focus almost exclusively on the traditional view that students transfer solely from two-year to four-year colleges. Second, state-level agreements tend to focus on transfer between public institutions and do not take into account the possibility of transfer to or from private or for-profit institutions. A survey we conducted in 2002 of state transfer officers, however, indicates that 66 percent of respondents have articulation agreements between public and private institutions within their state and 41 percent have articulation agreements, privately arrived at, between public institutions and proprietary institutions. Whatever the coverage of a state's policy, however, one of the most evident trends is the move away from voluntary agreements toward formal state-mandated policies.

Current National Efforts to Facilitate Transfer

There are many national efforts in place to supplement and enhance institution-to-institution and state articulation policies. Since 1977, AACRAO, for example, has maintained a database of institution-to-institution transfer credit practices, called Transfer Credit Practices (TCP). When it began, information was collected from only one reporting school in each state, typically a flagship, and disseminated in print form. Now, as times, technology and transfer have changed, TCP is a more robust, online database that includes several reporting institutions from each state. The database reports the transfer acceptance practices of reporting institutions and assists credit evaluators in determining how other institutions within their state evaluate course-by-course transfer credit. In addition, the AACRAO Web site pro-

vides a comprehensive list (Attachment 1) of state practices including mandates and articulation agreements as well as a variety of articles and links to outside sources that help transfer evaluators with credit applicability, equivalency and comparability determinations.

Since 1978, AACRAO has maintained an agreement with the American Council of Education and the accreditation community, now represented by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), called “The Joint Statement on Transfer and the Award of Credit (Attachment 2). This agreement, which emphasizes standards for evaluation of transfer credit, advocates equal examination of course quality, comparability and applicability.

AACRAO is engaged in other efforts, too, including a cooperative agreement with the New England Transfer Association and participation on the CHEA’s Committee on Transfer and the Public Interest. Further, our publication, *The College Transfer Student in America: The Forgotten Student*, offers research and practical advice to campus administrators concerning everything from maximizing the effectiveness of articulation agreements to addressing the specific and unique needs of an institution’s transfer population.

Obviously, AACRAO has done a lot of work on transfer issues. I would also like to recognize the contributions of others, particularly my fellow panelists, for their efforts to streamline transfer for both institutions and students. The National Articulation and Transfer Network with which AACRAO is pleased to be associated and its CollegeStepz Web site is an important resource for minority and underserved students. Further, its collection of nationwide articulation data is a good step toward development of a national research model. In Ohio, the development and implementation of the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) and Course Applicability System (CAS) have proven effective at streamlining equivalencies and portability. The ability to plan coursework around the prospect of a future transfer ensures that scarce time and resources are not spent in classes that won’t contribute to successful degree completion, wherever it may be earned.

Inefficiencies in the System

While institutional and state systems for transfer of credit are largely successful, we know that the system can be improved. There are inefficiencies for both students and for institutions. Uncertainty and lack of transparency cause significant difficulties for all parties in the transfer process. Many students cite denial of transfer credit as their primary source of concern. Students are sometimes misled to believe that their coursework at one institution will automatically transfer to another institution. Oftentimes students simply assume that coursework will transfer, without fully understanding the nuances of the evaluation process or the tremendous differences and diversity of higher education programs. The very quality of choice that we so value in American higher education precludes one national definition for each course, and causes slight differences that must be painstakingly evaluated as we review courses with identical titles from various institutions. Where the differences are truly slight, credit must be granted to expedite time-to-degree and avoid repetition and added costs for the sake of marginal new learning. Where significant differences are detected between courses of similar designation, however, for the sake of both the student and the reliability of institutional credentials, credit should not be granted. I don’t believe any observer of the transfer phenomenon would disagree with the foregoing statement. The challenge is to understand how these determinations are made, how they are made erroneously from time to time, and how to improve the process.

As I noted earlier in this testimony, credit may be denied for a number of reasons. Concerns about quality, comparability or applicability can result in adverse decisions. These concerns are, on occasion, caused or exacerbated by lack of adequate information about the sending institution, its academic policies, or its curriculum. Perhaps the greatest challenge in the evaluation process is this lack of adequate information about the student’s prior coursework. In many cases, transfer evaluators at the receiving institution have only a single sheet of paper—the transcript—through which to determine the award of credit. The transcript lists the name of the sending institution, the names of the courses the student took and the grades the student earned. With this information the evaluator is left to figure out much about the sending institution, the substance of the coursework—whether it is comparable to courses taught at the receiving institution—and the student’s academic achievement. With such little information, credit evaluators rely on quality measures like the accreditation of the sending institution and course descriptions in course catalogs to complete their evaluations. In addition to credits from traditional colleges and universities, credit evaluators examine and make determinations about credits earned through experiential learning, distance education, international edu-

cation and vocational schools. When there is a question regarding the applicability or comparability of a specific course, credit evaluators defer to faculty members in the relevant field for guidance. Greater transparency of sending institutions can alleviate such concerns, and facilitate successful transfer of credit where appropriate.

Beyond the factual difficulties of the task of evaluation, other issues compound the problems. These include proper disclosures and more accurate advance information—to student and institutions—about portability of credits, as well as a greater effort on the part of all institutions to address the unique needs of the transfer population.

Possible Solutions

From our perspective, the primary national policy priority regarding transfer is to enable and facilitate solutions that ease the portability of credit. Successful policy solutions will recognize that transfer is ubiquitous and will only become increasingly important as a mechanism for students to attain degree completion. Such solutions should be flexible enough to accommodate the myriad unique types of students and institutions involved in the transfer of credit process and should not be one-size-fits-all. Transfer policy should be based on assumptions that encourage students to matriculate through the educational system towards degree completion; that maintain a balance between public benefit and administrative burden; and that continue to recognize the institutional autonomy of curricula and degree requirements.

In addition to the efforts AACRAO and others here today are already engaged in, effective state policies are at the heart of programmatic success and degree attainment for transfer students. We believe that federal policy could supplement these efforts, however, and I'd like to offer a few suggestions.

First, the federal government could facilitate a voluntary data collection to provide receiving institutions with more detailed information about courses for which credit is sought by incoming transfer applicants. In creating better tools to support transfer credit evaluation on campus, the federal government can eliminate much of the friction in the system and promote the optimal outcome for students. One possible information collection and dissemination mechanism for this effort could be the College Opportunities Online portal on the U.S. Department of Education's Web site. Another possible portal for voluntary submission of course information would be the CollegeStepz Web site operated under the auspices of the National Articulation and Transfer Network. Such a site would voluntarily collect information such as institutional course inventories, catalog descriptions, syllabi, text books and faculty qualifications. This national information repository would not only help credit evaluators, it would help students better understand the academic offerings of participating institutions.

Second, federal policymakers should consider a disclosure requirement for institutions that make claims with regard to transferability of their coursework to other institutions. It appears that much of the student discontent about denials of transfer credit are based on claims made by sending institutions that turn out to be misleading. These claims are particularly troublesome when made at the point of recruitment, when students are basing enrollment decisions on them. Any claims about other institutions' credit acceptance policies should be based on facts. We believe institutions making claims about transferability of their credits to other institutions should be required to provide: (1) the basis for the transferability claim; (2) the number and types of articulation agreements in which the institution participates; and (3) the number of documented cases of successful transfer on a course-by-course basis.

Third, Congress could authorize a grant program to promote articulation agreements and increase degree attainment. Such grants could be awarded on a competitive basis to institutions to enable them to focus on improving transfer opportunities for traditional and non-traditional students. Additionally, the grants could promote articulation agreements among different institutions in order to improve the degree completion for incoming transfer students.

Conclusion

On behalf of the members of AACRAO, I thank you for your consideration of our views. We appreciate your extraordinary efforts on behalf of students and look forward to working with you as you advance the cause of education.

Chairman MCKEON. Thank you very much.

Well, you have given us a lot to think about, and I commend Florida and Ohio for what you are doing. That sounds like that would be a wonderful thing to see if all the States did that, and

if we could also work out an interstate policy, that would be great. That is our goal, is to help students, to not punish students, but rather to help them.

Members of Congress have documented evidence that some institutions of higher education accredited by the regional accreditors refuse to accept or even consider the transfer of credit from schools that are nationally accredited.

Are you aware of this problem? How widespread and how pervasive is this problem?

Dr. DAY. We are aware of it. I am not 100 percent sure of how pervasive it is. I know that, as far as our association, NATN, is concerned, we have been open to working with any institution as long as it is either nationally or regionally accredited or enjoys special accreditation status. As with anything, in the final analysis, it really gets down to the issue of the individual institution and the student who is coming from that particular institution.

Chairman MCKEON. So you believe that the student should be based on the school they have come from, not eliminated just because of the accrediting body?

Dr. DAY. Absolutely, that is basically the operating principles that have been adopted by the Commission on Higher Education Accreditation, that we should not be discriminating solely on the basis of the type of institution that is sending that student, i.e., a proprietary institution or whomever. It is really about looking at the individual institution and the student and bringing the two together and blending them in such a way as it conforms to the types of issues that Jerry Sullivan outlined for you.

Dr. ZIMMER. Chairman McKeon, the Ohio system assumes a nondiscriminatory policy. It is interesting if you say it the other way, your accrediting body will not kick you out of the system, but it alone won't get you in the system, either way. But that is an important point to make. You do not have a blanket ticket no matter what, because it all boils down to the course and curricular equivalencies. You could almost do a blind review, a 2-year institution whose name is not noted to a 4-year institution, because we look at the courses and the curriculum and the equivalency thereof.

Chairman MCKEON. I loved hearing your story about the student 3 years from now and how it is going to unfold for them, because that is what is driving this whole issue. That is why we have this issue in our bill, is because we are concerned that a student, especially one that is a first-time student in their family, they go to school, they are given some guidance on courses to take, and then, at the end of 2 years, find out that those courses do not transfer or half of those courses or a third of those courses do not transfer. And basically, I do not think education is a waste of time, but taking the same courses over and over again could be considered a waste of time in comparison with being able to spread yourself out to take other new classes.

We hear good things about Ohio and Florida. Some States are not doing this. Could you give us any feeling about which States are not and why they are not?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Well, nearly all States have some type of policy that is driving in the direction of freeing up mobility. Some schools,

to go back to that previous question, probably do use accreditation as a rationale.

I think typically what drives it is resources. It is difficult on the receiving end. Often, schools are faced with a situation of literally tens of thousands of applicants that they try to weed through, and, as a result, there is, I do not know whether it is a need, but a sense of, to get through it all, one needs to jump to some umbrella reason to say no.

Chairman MCKEON. Is a lot of that subjective, or is it objective?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Well, to some extent, you could say it is objective. What you are trying to do is say, here is a group of institutions who a trusted third party, an accreditor, has said they have reasonable criteria for the type of faculty and program they put together and they are similar to you.

Chairman MCKEON. What we are thinking of, and that is what we have in our bill, requiring the institutions to have a stated policy so that the decision is made here instead of here, and the student can have the decision made up front and not have wasted that time. And I think it will save all institutions a lot of time, because if they have a policy, they do not have to go back through and say, "Well, this may or may not be good, let's spend a lot of time discussing it." If they have an objective, written policy, then everybody complies with that, and there is no question.

A student cannot say I did not know, because it is there. It is on the Web; they can look at it and use it. Their counselors can use that in guiding them in course selection up front. It makes, I think, a much smoother, seamless policy all the way through.

Dr. ZIMPHER. I was just going to add that I think State reciprocity is really going to help us here. Ohio is very well situated, surrounded by five neighboring States that we have reciprocal relations with already, and I can easily see how Florida and Ohio, if we were able to have four or five national pilots that looked similar to Florida and Ohio, I think you could spread out from that direction.

I also think that the Web is exponentially our friend. This idea of a student portal, where all kinds of information from preschool to kindergarten to high school to college exists and students can test out the viability of what they are taking, this will help students be more engaged in high school and more of a guarantee from high school to 2-year, 2-year to 4-year, or, as we have not really mentioned today, a big part of the Ohio system is 4-year to 4-year. It is really important.

Chairman MCKEON. Right.

Mr. KILDEE.

Mr. KILDEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Zimpher and Dr. Klebacha, in developing the systems you have in Florida and in Ohio, how do you avoid going to the lowest common denominator on the quality of courses?

Dr. ZIMPHER. Well, Representative Kildee, when I mentioned that 400 faculty across the State had been involved, if you can imagine the time they have spent. They have looked at each course syllabus in their respective institutions, and by making the learning outcomes public and by using for the gen-ed curriculum sort of a 95 percent transferability—and even for a major course, it has to

be at least 70 percent compatible with learning outcomes from one institution to another—it has had the opposite effect.

It has caused us to revise curriculum up to a standard, and I think that is maybe counter-intuitive, but a lot of work by a lot of people looking individually at the curriculum has really raised the standard.

Dr. KLEBACHA. We have 191 faculty committees that are around content areas. So one way to ensure that you do not go to the lowest common denominator is you put them all in a room together, and you make them work it out. They will fight among themselves until they get to the point where they level out at a quality, rigorous coursework level.

Not only that, we have at the State level that practitioner group that I mentioned that reviews this and is a check and balance at the State level for ensuring that it is in fact a rigorous and quality program.

Dr. DAY. Mr. Kildee, just to follow up on that, prior to going to California, as the Chairman mentioned, I was in Florida, and at the time, while all of this was being planned and developed, I was the president of Daytona Beach Community College in Florida. And my chief academic officer was one of the key players on one of the major committees.

I have got to just give you some assurances, I think in the words of the president of the University of Cincinnati, it actually elevated the quality of both the discussion and also the outcomes from the point of view of the course work. Because not only did it bring all of the faculty and staff that Theresa was talking about to discuss issues regarding common course numbering, but after all of that was settled, we then went through a process of what we referred to as leveling, what is lower division and what is upper division, so there would be a line drawn about what the community college's responsibilities were and what the university's responsibilities were, so everybody knew what their job was. Everybody knew where they could focus their resources to get the very best effort. And the same thing applied to the lower division in the University of Florida system.

So, they are very comparable to what was going on in the community colleges. So it does work but is a long, deliberative process, and it does cost a lot of money.

Dr. ZIMPER. I would add, Representative Kildee, that, in Ohio, there is a pretty sophisticated higher education information system. We are actually tracking cohorts of students to make sure they have had success in transfer and successful completion of their courses. So I think that kind of data system, I know that you have been interested in data systems and what you could do on a national basis, but the advantage of our data system is you know where the student came from, what courses he or she has taken, what grade level achievement, whether or not it transferred to the next college or 2- or 4-year institution. That is the kind of assessment data I think we need, probably best generated at the State level.

Mr. KILDEE. Thank you. I am glad I asked that question. Good answers, good responses. I got some good knowledge.

Dr. Day, you mentioned that the Federal Government could provide some encouragement on a voluntary basis to achieve this. Does H.R. 609 go in that direction?

Dr. DAY. I think it is certainly trying to do that, but I think the concern that we have, probably the largest concern, is, despite all of the issues about posting policies, I do not think that is a big problem. I think every institution would be prepared to do that.

But the issue of the reporting, the subsequent and more detailed reporting requirements that necessarily have to be followed, from the point of view of not only the student that is coming in but the student who is being accepted and the amount of transfers as well as from the point of view of separate accrediting agencies, I think the better approach on that would be—because in each State, going back to Florida, for example, I mean, one of the things that really drove that train, if you will, on developing that system, was the development of statewide accountability standards. The same thing has just happened in California. Our chancellor of the community college system has just now turned over to the legislature and the Governor's office a whole new accountability plan that is not focused on statewide data. It is focused on districtwide data and has a compliment of statewide data that we are all going to be compared to, and one of the key elements of that is transfer.

I think the proper role of the Federal Government is to ensure that the States are following through with that.

Getting back to Chairman McKeon's question about whether there are different State practices. Well, it is rather spotty, in fact. As good a three-tiered system as California has, there is a lot of room for improvement. Not every State is like Florida and not every State is like Ohio. But we have got to try to build in some assurances that we move them and incentivize them to move in that direction, because there is certainly a lot of good people at the grassroots prepared to do that because they care about the students that they are serving.

Mr. KILDEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McKEON. The Chair yields to the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Boustany.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A couple of questions.

Mr. Sullivan, in your testimony, you talked about some of the constraints within the College Credit Mobility System that carries cost for institutions. Tell us a little bit more about cost, because I think we would like to know more about what the costs are for students and the institutions.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I am glad to. As transfers are currently set up, cost tends to fall on the receiving institution more than on the sending institution. We think there could be some better balance there.

The cost begins with personnel. Someone shows up on your campus with the idea of transferring to you, whether that be planned or unplanned. When it is planned, it is a little smoother, because there can be articulation agreements, as we heard here, in place. When it is unplanned, they show up often with an unknown school and a series of courses that little is known about. There will be a staff of X number of people trying to discover whether or not those

courses by the three criteria make any sense for giving credit at that particular institution.

I was at a panel similar to this out in California a couple of years ago listening to one of the State universities out there talking about how they did not have enough to get the job done, and they had a staff of nine trained evaluators carrying that out. That is a considerable expense.

Some of these ideas talked about here today begin to break through that cost. By the sending institution being able to provide more information online that an evaluator can look at, that would breakdown some of that problem.

I think President Day's project, approach to this also would begin to expand from State to State. His approach is that they are looking at regions rather than nationwide, where you would take a metropolitan area and faculty members can get together and begin to work on that.

We know that most transfers take place within about 50 miles of the institution, so you can start to develop these cells. It will bring down costs, and it will facilitate a great deal of this, rather than everything taking one effort taking care of the entire Nation, which probably will not work.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Thank you.

Are there any articulation agreements between liberal arts colleges and universities or interstate transfer agreements out there? Can any of you comment on some of that?

Dr. DAY. None that I know of that are formalized and that provide the student with the type of assurances that they would be able to effectively move from one State to another.

There are agreements that exist that allow a student, for example, the New England Compact Agreement, which allows a student from Maine, my home State, for example, that might want to go into and enjoy having access to a major that is not offered by the University of Maine system, but if it is offered by the University of Vermont, they will travel to the University of Vermont, and they will pay the comparable tuition of the State of Maine.

We have not approached that issue, but I think that you are going to see that emerging on the horizon, whether it is through the New England or the regional accrediting groups or such organizations as WICHE, which is the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education. I think everybody is focusing on this issue.

But, again, while there are issues when you work within a particular State, if you consider the State as a silo, you can get all of the things organized as much as you want, but the reality is that when somebody leaves Florida or Ohio and decides to go to Pennsylvania or to Illinois, the reality is they are at risk. That is the reason why we have to work developmentally to build this block, this coalition, on a local, regional and national level, so that we facilitate transfer around this country, and we do not put students at risk because of the fact that there is no room at the inn at their local State University or in the system itself; because of demands or demographics, they are forced to go out-of-state to get access to the upper division and baccalaureate degree, and that is when we have serious problems.

Mr. BOUSTANY. I thank you.

Chairman MCKEON. The Chair yields to the gentleman from New York, Mr. Bishop.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for holding this hearing.

I want to thank the panel first for all of the work you are doing in terms of facilitating the process by which students transfer from one institution to another. I consider that issue to be absolutely central to the issue of access and affordability, which ought to be one of our concerns as we reauthorize the Higher Education Act.

Dr. Day, I want to sort of follow up on the questions that Mr. Kildee asked. You said in your testimony that you believe that this issue required congressional support but that you thought that support ought to take the form of, in effect, encouraging schools to undertake volunteer activities as opposed to the Federal Government imposing activities or policies on schools.

Mr. Sullivan, you did not use those terms, you did not use "volunteer," you did not use "mandatory," but certainly the thrust of your testimony would be that you agree with that sentiment.

I guess my first question is to Dr. Zimpher and Dr. Klebacha. Do you also agree that the role of the Federal Government ought to be volunteer as opposed to mandatory in encouraging schools to facilitate the process by which students transfer from one institution to another?

Dr. ZIMPHER. Representative Bishop, I think if you parse the bill out, what I know of it, I do not have deep knowledge of it, I think the Federal perspective on nondiscriminatory policies is an important one, and, as I said before, I think that should not be the determinant one way or the other. So I think it has been helpful to articulate at a national level, say, in a bill of this sort, that there are certain principles that should be adhered to.

But, yes, I think in the final analysis, States are better equipped to move in these directions and move reciprocally with other States.

I am not sure that a national data system is in our near-time horizon, but I also learned a great deal from listening to Florida today. I think we have many similarities in our system. I think encouraging pilots, giving recognition to States that have made progress, would be very important to voluntarily encouragement of others.

Dr. KLEBACHA. Thank you for the question, Congressman Bishop. I, too, agree that it should be voluntary. However, I do believe that there is a role of Congress to establish basic minimum expectations right up front: This is what we expect to see; these are the goals we are trying to reach, put in place motivations, performance funding, those kinds of things we did, to encourage institutions to move toward the goals and expectations, and, as Dr. Day mentioned, have performance measures that you specifically will be looking at and measuring, give credit to those that have met those and further encourage them, and those that have not, perhaps they will once they see that the students will gravitate toward the programs that do adhere to those areas.

Plus, I like the idea of Congress serving as a repository of information, because, to some extent, excuse me, Congress encouraging a repository at the Federal level. We have a bunch of information

we could share up there. The same thing with Ohio and these other States. Eventually, you will have a network of information that can be tapped into for particular quality indicators that our registrars are looking for. So I would encourage voluntary participation.

Mr. BISHOP. Let me, if I may, there is very specific language in H.R. 609 which deals with the issue of transferability of credit, and it imposes on the institutions certain minimum requirements. I guess my question is, do you see the imposition of those certain minimum requirements as a mandate from the Federal Government? And, if so, is that a mandate that you believe is reasonable, or do you see this as sort of going over the line from encouraging and support of the behavior on the part of the Federal Government to imposition of behavior?

Dr. ZIMMER. Representative Bishop, the specification of certain data minimums, I think, is at issue here, because we need data that are really useful. We need to know where students have come from, what courses they have taken, whether those courses were accepted at the receiving institution and whether or not they continue to matriculate toward graduation.

As it is currently defined, I guess we are not quite sure what national data system or minimum set of data entries would do for us, except add a layer of data collection that may not tell us where the student came from, what courses they took, how successful they were and if they are matriculating. So the concern, really, and I am sure we have to, I personally, have to study it more, but the concern is that data that are mandated as minimums be useful.

Mr. BISHOP. Sir?

Dr. DAY. I would support that, particularly as it relates to the detail. When we say minimum, and then you take a look at the real detail associated with the reporting requirements on the data, that is going to be a lot of work and time and effort.

I do think, however, that there are some things that clearly need to be emphasized in the bill about the issue of transfer policies. The principles that guide those transfer policies, those ought to be all clear up front so that, in terms of the truth in advertising, so the student knows what they are getting.

I think also there has to be assurances, and I think this is where the Federal Government working in concert with the State—I do not know if it is really humanly possible for you folks to be able to track how well institutions are doing from an accountability standpoint. It is a lot easier for you to track 50 States' performance than it is the 3,000-plus post-secondary institutions, public, private, proprietary.

So I just think we ought to be looking at the States and having some minimum requirements of those States that essentially says we have got some performance criteria, we do have some accountability standards and they relate to the core mission of the respective institutions and one of my core missions is transfer. So when we design an accountability plan for the City College of San Francisco, I am going to be specifying beginning to end to my State and to the State legislature what I am going to do.

I think you need to get some assurances that indeed every single State is doing that.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCKEON. Does every school have a transfer policy of what they accept? What would be the problem with asking that that be put on a Web site?

Dr. ZIMPER. I think that is where we are going.

Chairman MCKEON. That is exactly where we are going.

Dr. ZIMPER. The student portal idea, which has many, many pieces of information in it, will make it perfectly obvious what the transfer policies are.

Chairman MCKEON. That is all we are asking. That is what we have been asking in the bill, is that every school have a policy, that they do not make the policy based on the individual student. That they have the policy, and the student can then go to the Web site and know what that policy is, and it is not going to be based on them; it is going to be based on what they are doing.

The Chair now yields to the gentleman from Nebraska, Mr. Osborne.

Mr. OSBORNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for being here today.

I am looking at this from a little different standpoint in that I was in the coaching profession for a long time, and we dealt with a lot of transfers, and we looked at a lot of transcripts. It was always difficult to figure out exactly how good a student was. You could look at the transcript, and they had had college algebra. They had had chemistry at the junior college or community college level, and yet sometimes, you would find that, once you got that student on the campus, that those courses really did not translate into a very sound academic base.

Some places, this probably was more peculiar to the athletic community, you might find that, out of the 30, 35 hours that a student athlete transferred, that maybe almost half of them were taught by members of the coaching staff at the school. So just looking at the course title and the syllabus and so on did not always tell the story.

There was one school, maybe it is perfectly legitimate now, Azusa Pacific, I remember hearing about from time to time, where athletes actually, through mail order, got quite a few credits, and you had to be pretty nervous about that.

So we certainly want to be fair to the community colleges. They do a great job, and we do not want to discriminate against students who have done the work and have had sufficient academic rigor.

But do you have any thoughts as to how you ferret out those places that are really not operating in a legitimate fashion and that are really not providing the necessary academic background? Because there are so many things that are difficult to ferret out just by looking at a syllabus or a transcript. And I invite any of you to hazard an opinion here or—

Dr. ZIMPER. Well, Representative Osborne, it really sounds like there is a great deal of similarity in the course review process that has been initiated in both Florida and Ohio.

Sheer numbers of faculty who have been brought to the table from two- and 4-year institutions to review the course syllabus, the expectations that the syllabus must express learning outcomes, this is a transition from seat time or credit hours to “What did you learn?” and “What were you expected to learn?” the high degree of

equivalency established between courses that are judged from one campus to another;

An appeals process for disputes when there is disagreement amongst the disciplinarians has really taken us a long way to some more reliability that this course does what it says it does.

And I think the public scrutiny makes a big difference. And convening committees across multiple disciplines has certainly been a key to our process in Ohio; it sounds like the process in Florida.

Mr. OSBORNE. I thank you for that answer. But what I am trying to say is that simply examining the syllabus and looking at the supposed course content doesn't always tell the story.

And if you look at graduation rates—the NCAA tracks this very closely—of junior college athletes as opposed to those who enroll as freshmen, there is a stark contrast. And yet—

Dr. ZIMPER. This is one place where tracking the success of the transfer student can make that difference. Because what happens to you, if you have taken a course that didn't have the requisite content, is that you will not do well in the next course that you take when you transfer.

So part of our data system is tracking the success of the student after we have made the judgment that they do have the academic content. So when they go on to the next level of courses at the next institution, we will know if they are failing those courses. It will suggest very directly that what we thought was happening in that course was not.

Dr. KLEBACHA. If I may, sir. There is a certain benefit to accreditation. And I am not for or against accreditation, but what I am for is that there be established somewhere some basic standards that any institution must meet in terms of assuring the receiving institution that the basic standards, be they in their transfer policy perhaps under the guidelines that we are talking about—a receiving institution registrar would have a certain level of good feeling or understanding that that institution at least adheres to these minimum standards, which automatically takes off the top faculty credentials, takes off the top content review, takes off the top on a regular basis what are your performance indicators, those types of content quality indicators of an institution that a receiving institution can be assured is OK to begin with.

And then they can focus more attention on the specific courses associated with it—even, they could spend more time going back and verifying to the extent that they need to. And then, of course, you establish a track record of an institution that continues to send you students. You can see from the performance of their students whether there might be a different issue as well.

Dr. DAY. I would just, as Mr. Osborne, as the CEO of a community college who has enjoyed the benefit of being the national coach of champs in football in 4 of the last 5 years that, in fact, the greatest level of success that we have with our students is when we get them into the institution, coaching and mentoring them, outside and off the field, and providing them with support services. And when our students transfer, generally speaking, we find that they have more success at transferring to a senior institution if they have more of the credit package that represents the associate degree.

If you take a student that has less than or just has 1 year of experience, which a lot of colleges show up on my campus, and they see a star and they know that they have cleaned up their eligibility requirements and they now could be eligible for NCAA criteria, you know, they do put pressure on them, they try to recruit the student after they have only completed half of what we would call our program.

What we try to do is to work with that student and say, "Look, postpone your gratification in terms of transferring. Stay with us; it is going to be much more successful." And we find that when they have got that degree and they have got all the general ed and when they have got all of the degree requirements out of the way, when they transfer they are going to do better and outperform the athletes that grew up in those institutions as freshmen because they are that much better prepared.

But if you take them prematurely, you are going to get what you ask for, and there are some issues and some problems. And I am just being candid with you; they couldn't get into the University of Nebraska in the first place because they didn't meet eligibility requirements, which meant that they weren't academically ready for that type of an institution.

So we take them and we work with them just the same way as we do all with students, regardless. And the longer we have them, the more successful they are going to be at your level.

Mr. OSBORNE. Well, if you would grant me another 20 seconds, I would say that your observations are very correct, that those people who have done the full 2 years and have got their A.A. are much better candidates. And I think there are some community colleges, some junior colleges that do a tremendous job.

But there are the others, and therefore it is always difficult to declare a national standard and say, "Well, this one size fits all." It is a little bit risky.

But, anyway, those are my observations. And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McKEON. The Chair yields to the gentleman from Oregon, Mr. Wu.

Mr. WU. I thank the Chairman.

I represent an area where there are several community colleges and one of our State universities. Portland State University has agreements with the adjacent community colleges to provide not only for transfer, but concurrent enrollment and unified financial aid so that, for example, a student can take a course at one of the community colleges in the morning, work, and take a course at Portland State in the evening depending on his or her needs.

In your experience, how common is that kind of arrangement around the country? Is it quite common now, or is that still a little bit unusual? Or is it geography dependent?

Dr. DAY. I think in States like in California, where that is currently being tested to the limits in terms of the pipeline demographics of too many people coming out and too few places, that pattern that you have just described used to be pretty prevalent throughout the higher education system. And it also was prevalent with the—between the high schools and the community colleges, and you are aware of that practice.

But as the demands for enrollment have increased at all levels of our system—and I think that this is very much the case in other States as well, who are all trying to deal with this burdensome level of demand—it becomes harder to agree to allow a student from a local community college to sit in that seat because they might be taking up the space of another aspiring student who is a member of the university community.

But it absolutely should be encouraged. We ought to try to work at it. But there are States that have had some problems following through with what you are talking about.

Mr. WU. It seems to me that that capacity constraint, that is a little counterintuitive, because if you have a capacity issue, by being able to cross-enroll, it seems that you would get more efficiency out of the total education system.

So to ramp down that crossover ability when you have capacity constraints, that seems very counterintuitive to me.

Dr. ZIMPHER. Well, as I heard the question, Representative Wu, we have had some what we call “bilateral” and “trilateral” agreements for a long time that are going to serve as a model for statewide agreements. But it doesn’t ramp up without the encouragement of statewide policy.

So I think—for a long time students have been able, for instance, in Cincinnati to work from Cincinnati State to U.C. We have some remarkable 2-year to 4-year degrees. Culinary arts at the 2-year goes on to a bachelor’s degree in culinary arts at the University of Cincinnati. But we didn’t have a sort of systemic statewide impetus to make this more geographically fluid.

So we are continuing to develop those bilateral, two institutions, or trilateral agreements. And, in fact, if you are in a bilateral agreement with two institutions and one of them enters into another bilateral agreement with another institution, we then calibrate that three ways so that it keeps ramping up.

Mr. WU. So what I am hearing is, without a little bit of a nudge, we don’t make progress in that direction.

Dr. ZIMPHER. I think that is what we thought in Ohio, and I think that is why we have made a lot of progress. And the State legislature is a very effective nudger.

Dr. DAY. Mr. Wu, if I may, I don’t want to give you the impression that we are not doing—if you look at it totally from a student’s perspective, I mean, my No. 1 transfer feeder institution is San Francisco State University, which is about a mile and a half down the road from where my main hub of activity is at City College of San Francisco.

The reality is that students advantage the system without us having any formal agreement. I know that there are a lot of students from San Francisco State University that come up Ocean Avenue and study at my campus, and they take the courses. And the only thing that they have to be assured of is that they are taking a course that is equivalent to what we call the general education core requirements that are common to the U.C.-C.S.U. community college system.

Mr. WU. My apologies for cutting you short. My time is drawing short as I see from the color of the lights. And I just wanted to ask

a follow-up based on my colleague from Nebraska's question and concern.

My experience in transferring high school, community college, college credits was that the college and graduate institutions I was in had a remarkably open policy, and they depended entirely on the integrity of the professors in those courses to evaluate the course materials from the prior institution. And if they signed off on it, then you got credit; and if you didn't get a professor to sign off on it, you weren't going to get credit.

I am concerned—and the Chairman may be amused that he is hearing this from a Democrat. I am concerned that setting any—that setting national standards would somehow interfere with this kind of autonomous process of independent evaluation by faculty members.

Am I off base in this concern; or, you know, because I am concerned, as Mr. Osborne said, about a one-size-fits-all approach?

Mr. MCKEON. If the gentleman would yield.

Mr. WU. Yes.

Mr. MCKEON. I think reference has been made to our bill that we introduced, and we don't set any standards in the bill. All we ask is that the institutions publicly publish their policy for transfer, they set all—the schools set their standards.

All we are saying is, put it out publicly so that the student will know up front what the standards are, so when they are at this school, they can take a course that they know will transfer to this school, rather than taking the course and then having to go hat in hand and say, "What is the chance of transferring?"

Mr. WU. Reclaiming my time from the Chairman, my concern with this is, would it permit a system where the only way that you know that the credits transfer is to run it by a faculty member at the transferring institution? If that happens to be your standard, would it pass muster under the proposed language? And there is a concern there about if you have prior approval.

Mr. MCKEON. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. WU. Yes.

Mr. MCKEON. So you are saying if the receiving institution puts in their public policy that we will accept any English 101 class from any school if our English professor will approve it?

Mr. WU. Yes.

Mr. MCKEON. I guess, if that is what they want to put as their policy, that is the risk you take, because they will have the right to publish their policy.

Dr. DAY. I think that there is probably another way to go about this, specifying that level of detail. Regional, specialized, and national accreditation criteria do outline procedures and practices that should dictate how credit is reviewed and assessed and provides for equivalency.

And so at the heart of it really is—and I can't speak for national, but I know for specialized, because I have been there, done that, as well as for regional, that the basic core principle is, it is the responsibility of the college faculty; and the presumption is, in certain program areas in particular, that that is where the quality control issue has to be resolved that determines whether or not the credit is equivalent to the credits that are offered by that depart-

ment. And I think by simply abiding and reaffirming and supporting those criteria and practices that are already—that every single institution that enjoys some accreditation status has got to follow if they are going to be accredited, then you have accomplished, in effect, the objective that you are trying to achieve without specifying in law that an English faculty member has to be responsible for accrediting or determining the accreditation status.

And I know you are not going to that level of extreme, but—so—

Mr. SULLIVAN. Congressman Wu, I was just going to add to that.

I think one of the problems that we see is that H.R. 609 goes beyond just asking for a policy statement. It actually goes on to say how that process ought to be carried out, and it leaves out some of the criteria that we currently use. And so it is more than just stating a policy. It goes on, it eliminates the evaluation process to analysis of comparability and student performance.

And so the idea of quality and applicability gets left out of this, and I can see that as a significant problem down the road, and not really what the Committee would like to see happening.

Mr. WU. Well, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Sullivan, this is—I think we are close to being on parallel courses here, but I am a little bit concerned about what it looks like out the windshield, as opposed to in the rearview mirror, if the standard evaluations are, for example, at the end of a course and you evaluate content for performance after a course is taken. And if we are setting—and that is a rearview mirror look.

And if we are setting something up as prospective criteria, although I think we are on parallel paths, I just want to express a little bit of concern about prospectively binding the receiving institution, giving the receiving institution enough flexibility to deal with the transferred credits and the transferring student in an appropriate way so that the faculty can ultimately be the control—quality control of both coursework and students.

Dr. ZIMPER. Representative Wu, I think that the Ohio and Florida systems are a “yes” in strategy. They represent the best thinking of the faculty, but they take the guesswork out of student course credit taking.

Mr. WU. Well—

Mr. MCKEON. The time has expired.

Mr. WU. I thank the forbearance of the Chairman. You will forgive me for having question marks in my mind any time the best of all possible worlds is presented on this Hill. We look forward to working together. Thank you.

Mr. MCKEON. The Chair yields to the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Tiberi.

Mr. TIBERI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize to the panel that I wasn't here for your statements. I was talking to some future college students, 8th graders from Columbus, Ohio. I was plugging Ohio State, Dr. Zimpher. Sorry. But if they don't go to Ohio State, U.C. would be a good alternative.

Dr. ZIMPER. They could start there and transfer to U.C.

Mr. TIBERI. Just kind of following up on the latest line of questioning, Dr. Zimpher, as a former nudger myself in the State legislature, and having had conversations in the past with the late Dr.

Nestor at Columbus State and Val Moeller, now the new president, who has been there for some time, and former presidents Gordon Gee and Brent Kerwin at Ohio State about formalizing a relationship between a 2-year college and a 4-year college in Ohio may be unique, I don't know, because of the growth of 2-year colleges and the number of 2-year colleges that we have and the number of public 4-years that we have in Ohio that are closely located to 4-years and 2-years.

We have come a long way since I was a student in college at Ohio State of working together with 2-years and 4-years. Columbus State in central Ohio where I used to live has grown exponentially over the last 20 years. And many of those students, like my little sister, started at Columbus State—not for academic reasons, more for financial reasons—and ended at Ohio State. And there were some difficulties back in the 1990's when she transferred.

But as you said, nudgers have helped, and the universities have worked together.

Do you think that there should be some more formal agreements or laws put in place at the national and State levels to force institutions to do a better job across the country of aligning 2-years and 4-years or junior colleges and 4-years?

Dr. ZIMPER. Representative Tiberi, it is nice to see you. And thank you for your work on this Committee—Subcommittee.

I think Ohio has come a long way in part because of a recent bill, House bill 95, which was introduced 2 years ago. We have a 15-year-old transfer module, so we have been at this a long time. But what we were doing is, we were saying to students, you have to complete the entire module before you can transfer. So students were taking some of the courses, but not all of the courses, and then having to take courses over because they had only done a part of the module.

Based on the encouragement of legislation in the Ohio General Assembly, we have stripped that off. We are now looking at the course as the unit of analysis. We have created these pathways to majors. We have all of the 2- and 4-year institutions agreeing to participate in this system.

We are moving, as you can see, to an electronic information system. When I keep talking about the ATM card, I am really talking about your ability to put a card in a machine and get out an accounting of your courses.

So I think what we have managed to accomplish—and I guess Representative Shawn Webster from Ohio would be pleased to hear this as the sponsor of the bill—is that that partnership between the legislature and the Ohio Board of Regents has made a profound difference. And I would say, in 2 years' time, we have done more than we were able to do in 15 years by that stimulation.

But I think Ohio has a culture different than, say, Florida. We have a coordinating board, you have a governing board. We govern more by encouragement and influence than we do by edict and by rule, and that is the working relationship we had with the legislature. I am very supportive of that. And I think, as a university president, working very closely with President Moeller and President Ron Wright at Cincinnati State, this is working well for Ohio.

Mr. TIBERI. Good.

Does anyone else want to comment?

Dr. DAY. Let me just follow up and just metaphorically say that if we hold their feet to the fire too much, they are never going to show up and do anything at the dance.

This country's postsecondary higher education system from—particularly from an accreditation standpoint, is based upon the notion and the core principle of voluntary participation in that process. And even though the words are there, “voluntary participation,” the Federal Government says that if you want to have access to Title IV(A) funding for student financial aid, you have got to make sure that you are fully accredited by a nationally recognized association. That is a good thing.

That is a good thing, but it doesn't—so there are some generalized benchmarks and boilerplate criteria that I think we can use. But I think if we really want the best results, in the final analysis, the system has got to be voluntary, not forced; it has got to make the best of all of the best practices that we are hearing about in States like Florida and Ohio. And there are others.

We also ought to be tapping into the regions that have for a long time put a lot of heavy emphasis, as regional accrediting groups have gone in to accredit institutions and take a look at their programmatic infrastructure and their array of student services. They always come in and evaluate us on the basis of how well our graduates are doing and how well they are getting from point A to point B.

I think, if we encourage and incentivize that system, it is going to provide you with more than—more results than you are expecting as opposed to forcing them and holding their feet to the fire too much.

Mr. TIBERI. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I know my time has expired. Just in closing, I would like to thank personally Dr. Zimpher for coming today. We miss you in Columbus, but we are pleased to see a former Buckeye doing so well at the University of Cincinnati. Thank you.

Mr. MCKEON. I detect a little prejudice for the Buckeyes. And if you can spread that wealth around throughout the whole State, that is probably good.

Thank you all for being here today, for your comments. As we go through this process, I know I have learned some things today, I hope all of the Committee has. And I know I am going to go back and relook at some of the things that we have talked about.

I hope you will stay in close contact with us. As we go through the process of reauthorization, we encourage your continued input. Thank you very much.

The Subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:26 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

