

**REVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE ARTICULATION AGREEMENT
THAT EXISTS BETWEEN CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
AND CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA**

A Report to the:

Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, Senate Appropriations Committee on
Education/Higher Education, and the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education

Submitted By

The State Board of Community Colleges and
The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina

November 1, 2018

As Required by

Session Law 2013-72 (HB 903)

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA & THE NORTH CAROLINA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM COMPREHENSIVE ARTICULATION
AGREEMENT REPORT TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE**

NOVEMBER 1, 2018

S.L. 2013-72 (HB 903) North Carolina General Statute 116-11(10c) requires The University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System to conduct biannual joint reviews of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement to ensure that the agreement is fair, current, and relevant for all students and institutions and to report their findings to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, including all revisions to the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement and reports of noncompliance by November 1 of each year. The statute also requires The University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System to jointly develop an articulation agreement advising tool for students, parents, and faculty to simplify the course transfer and admissions process.

SUMMARY

The revised Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) was signed by the UNC Board of Governors and the State Board of Community Colleges on February 21, 2014. The CAA was implemented for Fall Semester 2014. The Transfer Advisory Committee (TAC) has completed the first round of CAA compliance campus site visits and, to date, there have been no reports of noncompliance by any institution.

The UNC System (UNC) and the NC Community College System (NCCCS) continue to work to enhance educational opportunities for NCCCS students by improving transfer administration via electronic tools and up-to-date course and degree information. The UNC Transfer Student Success Website, the College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC), and published Baccalaureate Degree Plans provide students with access to current information that permits them to make the best choice possible in selecting institutions and degree programs. Both systems will work together to develop and support various online degree mapping tools to facilitate informed and efficient transfer.

This report provides an update on efforts to implement fully the CAA. The TAC is committed to providing students and institutions with information and strategies that will enable students to achieve associate degree and baccalaureate degree completion.

The most recent version of the 2014 CAA (revised August 2016), complete with appendices, is available at

<http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/academic-programs-college-transferarticulation-agreements>

CAA PROGRESS- 2018

Transfer Enrollment and Performance Data

The UNC Data Dashboard provides crucial data on transfer student enrollment trends, credit hours and degree transfers, graduation rates, grade point average, performance in disciplines after transfer, and more. These data are broken down by community college and university. The Data Dashboard is vital to determining whether or not the 2014 CAA is having an impact on transfer student success and whether the changes in policy and practice put in place as a result of the CAA and the CAA Compliance Site Visits are achieving the desired positive outcomes. This information is critical to the decision-making process for both individual community colleges and universities – and for the two systems. Students who entered the NCCCS in fall 2014 are under the protections of the 2014 CAA, and an increasing number have transferred to the UNC System as of fall 2017. The increasing number of transfer students who fall under the protections of the 2014 CAA and their successful transfer to senior institutions give a clear indication of the value of the 2014 CAA to students.

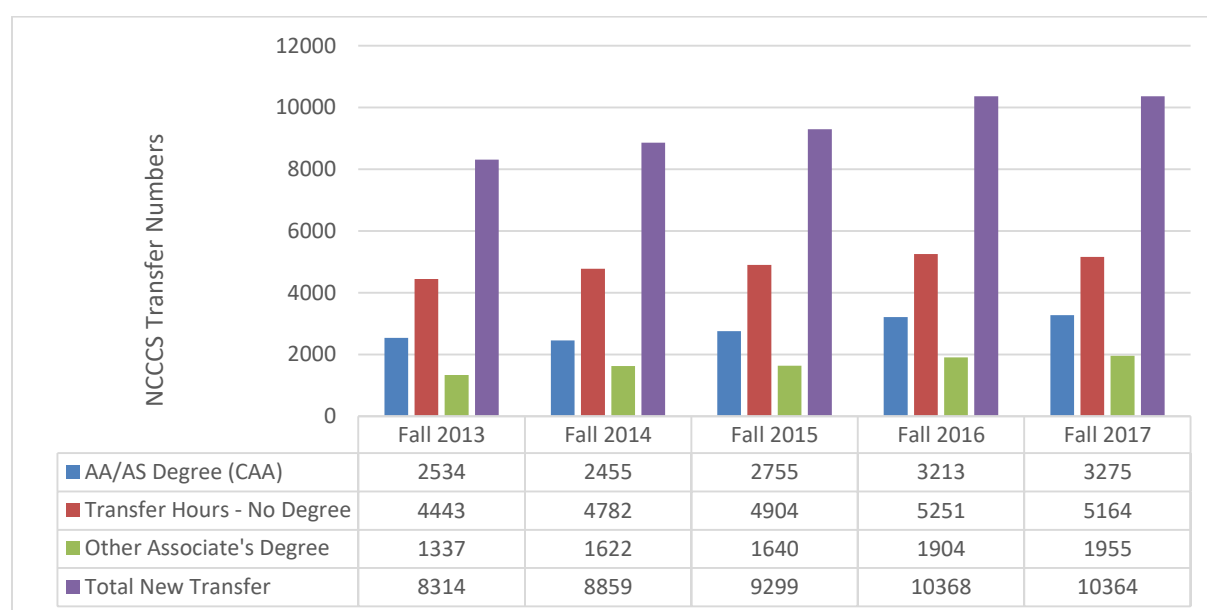
Transfer Student Enrollment

There continues to be a steady increase in the enrollment of NCCCS transfer students in UNC institutions. The increase is a clear result of the revised CAA, proper advising, and the strong collaboration between UNC and NCCCS. Data results from fall 2016 and fall 2017 show significant increases in associate degree completion and in overall transfer enrollment. Since the majority of community college students do not complete in two years, the TAC anticipates an increasing trend toward associate degree completion prior to transfer and in overall transfer enrollment. Students, advisors, and institutions are gaining a better understanding of the protections of the CAA and the wide-ranging benefits of degree completion. In fall 2016, data illustrate a substantial increase in the number of NCCCS students transferring to the UNC System, from 9,372 in 2015 to 10,368 in 2016, a nearly 1000-student increase, the largest one-year increase witnessed to date (see Table 1). For fall 2017, transfers again exceeded the 10,000 transfer student threshold with 10,364. Furthermore, in fall 2016, a significant increase in the number of associate degree completers transferred, over 400, from 2,775 in 2015 to 3,213 in fall 2016. This trend has continued in fall 2017 with 3,275 associate degree completer transfers. From fall 2015 to fall 2017, a remarkable increase of over 500 associate degree completers occurred. From 2015 to 2017, a significant increase in the number of Associate in Applied Science (AAS) completers transferred to UNC institutions, from 1,640 to 1,955, an over 300-student increase. This increase is attributable to the increasing number of bi-lateral agreements

between institutions and confirms the positive and productive working relationships between individual community colleges and UNC institutions, particularly at the programmatic level. The insertion of CAA-protected Universal General Education Transfer Component (UGETC) courses into the general education hours of AAS programs is also facilitating a smooth transition to the senior institutions. Although the number of students transferring credit hours without degrees has increased, the rate of increase was far less than the rate of those transferring after degree completion. The increase in overall transfer numbers and the increase in degree completers prior to transfer indicate the positive impact of the 2014 CAA on transfer student success in North Carolina.

Table 1

New NCCS Student Enrollment to UNC

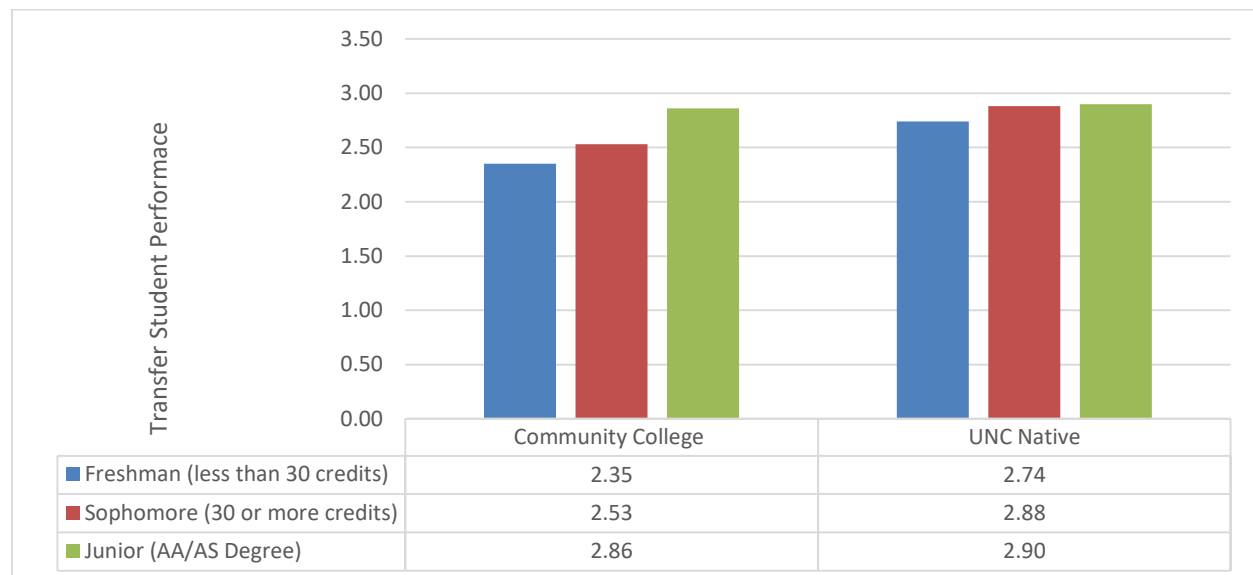


Transfer Performance Data

The data results for transfer student performance continue to indicate a strong correlation between degree and credit hour completion prior to transfer and academic performance at the senior institution (see Table 2). Students who transfer from a North Carolina community college into a UNC institution with fewer than 30 credits significantly lag behind their native counterparts in first-year performance. Community college transfers who transfer with more than 30 credit hours but without associate degree completion are closer in performance with their sophomore UNC native counterparts but still trail in GPA attainment. Students who complete the associate degree prior to transfer and matriculate as juniors perform comparably with UNC native juniors. These results confirm the foundational principle of the CAA that transfer students who complete the associate degree prior to transfer will perform as well as students who began their college careers at UNC institutions.

Table 2

2017 Transfer Student Performance Grade Point Average- First Year



Compliance Campus Site Reviews of 2014 CAA

In January 2016, the Transfer Advisory Committee (TAC) established review teams and a process for reviewing the institutional transfer credit policies and procedures of two UNC institutions per quarter. The TAC completed the first round of reviews for 15 UNC institutions in November 2017. (The North Carolina School of the Arts was not included in the compliance visits due to few transfers.) The second round of reviews will begin during fall 2018.

TAC/CAA Site Visit Process and Schedule

For the 2016-2017 site reviews, the UNC System Office sent out the CAA Review Form to each scheduled institution at least one month prior to the visit. The institution returned the form two weeks after receiving it. The appointed site team then connected with the institution's Transfer Point Person to schedule the visit. The Review Form requested basic information concerning transfer policies and practices of the institution. The form also requested transfer student admissions and performance data, including transfer student completion rates and accumulated credits to baccalaureate degree. Upon completion of the first round of site visits in 2017, the TAC reviewed, revised, and expanded the Review Form and the site visit process for a more comprehensive and detailed examination of institutional practices, transfer data, and student experiences. The changes to the Review Form include additional requests regarding published CAA information and transfer credit policies; an expanded Baccalaureate Degree Plan (BDP) section; further data concerning transfer student performance, graduation rates, transfer student credit hours, and degree completion credit hours; a list of most popular transfer student majors and top feeder community colleges; and an inventory of articulation agreements with individual community colleges. The TAC also modified the actual site visit schedule to include interviews with NCCCS transfer students and to offer a TAC CAA Open Forum for all campus personnel. The purpose of these changes is for the TAC members to get a broader and more detailed

perspective of transfer at the senior institution, to identify any issues that adversely impact students, and to partner with institutional personnel to formulate strategies for improvement.

CAA Compliance and Feedback Report

Upon completion of the site visits in 2016-17, the site teams submitted Feedback Reports to the entire TAC for review and approval. Each Report combined both narrative and data points and included information obtained from the CAA Review Form and the interviews conducted on the site visit. After review and approval, the UNC System Office sent the Reports to each university provost with the expectation for campus distribution to appropriate personnel. For 2018-19, the TAC expects to follow the same process. All reviewed institutions have been found in compliance with the CAA. TAC members have found the completed site visits positive and informative. Though seamless transfer challenges still exist, the universities, in collaboration with their community college partners, are making concerted efforts to improve the transfer process and to enhance transfer student support and performance. A number of institutions have included transfer expansion as part of their Strategic Plan. The completed site visits have illuminated both the existing challenges to transfer student success and the best practices institutions have implemented to assist transfer students in achieving their academic and professional goals. Ultimately, UNC institutions are very desirous of accepting NCCCS transfer students, and they are working to make the transfer process as seamless as possible.

Baccalaureate Degree Plans (BDPs)

The Baccalaureate Degree Plan is a critical component of the transfer student process. The plans create a clear transfer pathway by identifying and outlining community college and university courses that will lead to timely baccalaureate degree completion. Unfortunately, BDP management continues to be problematic at some universities, and there is little consistency in maintenance, oversight, and formatting across the system. The TAC has added a BDP section to the Review Form and will make BDP review a priority during the 2018-19 campus visits. The TAC will also review the BDP template and determine whether a standardized template is advisable. The TAC will continue to work with the NCCCS and the individual community colleges on strengthening student academic advising and emphasizing BDP use for University Transfer students. Tracking student BDP selection is also problematic since programs of study at the university change often. Senior institutions with the strongest BDP management are those that have centralized the process and oversight. The TAC recommends a central management structure at each university for oversight and maintenance of the BDPs.

Reverse Transfer

The Reverse Transfer Program is a collaborative effort between North Carolina's Community Colleges and the University of North Carolina's 16 constituent institutions. Students who transfer to a North Carolina university from one of the 58 North Carolina community colleges are given the opportunity to combine the credits earned at the university with credit already earned at the community college to determine if the associate degree requirements have been met. Students who do not complete the baccalaureate degree will at least earn a marketable credential. In 2016,

the TAC mandated that universities must publish their Reverse Transfer Policy and whether or not transfer students will have met lower-division general education requirements with associate degree completion through the Reverse Transfer Program. Since 2014, over 2,000 transfer students have been awarded an Associate Degree from their home community college. The TAC is currently addressing the tracking and reporting processes for Reverse Transfer students.

Expanding Transfer Opportunities

The concept of transfer and the very definition of a “transfer student” have undergone a significant evolution in the last few years. Historically, transfer students were generally confined to the Associate in Arts and Associate in Science categories. However, these limited categorical identifications no longer adequately or accurately define the varied community college pathways students may journey on their way to senior institution enrollment and baccalaureate degree completion. North Carolina has become a national leader in developing various transfer pathways for students to achieve their academic and professional goals, and the CAA has been the foundation upon which these pathways have been built. The strong partnership between the UNC and North Carolina Community College Systems has led to articulation agreements for the Associate in Engineering and Associate in Fine Arts programs and the redesign of curriculum standards to facilitate transfer for students in those programs seeking baccalaureate degrees. In addition, the systems continue to work on Education pathways. Further, high school students across the state in Career and College Promise and Early College High School programs are taking advantage of the availability of college classes, in both the community colleges and universities, to accumulate credits prior to enrollment. The data also indicate a significant increase in Associate in Applied Science transfers to senior institutions, due in no small part to the growing number of bi-lateral articulation agreements between individual institutions. The CAA has served as a catalyst for this transfer growth and redefinition, and the strong collaboration between the two systems has produced tremendous results in articulation expansion and implementation.

Transfer Credit Appeal Procedure

The Transfer Credit Appeal Procedure provision in Appendix E of the CAA exists to help any student who believes the terms and protections of the CAA have not been adhered to by a UNC institution to which the student has been admitted. The instructions for this process outline the steps a student must take to address the issue up to and including a TAC review of the situation. A timeline for the appeal process and the appeal form are included in the appendix. Student awareness and use of the Appeal Procedure has been limited. While a small number of student CAA issues have been brought to the TAC’s attention, these issues have generally been informally resolved on the local level through conversations between TAC members and UNC institution personnel. Unfortunately, student interviews have revealed a general lack of awareness of the Appeal Procedure. Moving forward, the mandatory ACA 122 course on each BDP and the course’s renewed emphasis on transfer issues and the CAA will help to inform students of the process. Transfer advisors at the community colleges are also being encouraged to make students aware of their CAA protections and the recourse of the Appeal Procedure.

Course Credit Test Transfer Policy

Section V: A10 of the CAA covers “Transfer of Advanced Placement (AP) Credit.” TAC members have received repeated requests for clarification on how other course credit exams, such as Dantes, CLEP Subject, and International Baccalaureate (IB), should be reviewed. To address these requests, the TAC added the following sentence to this item: “TAC recommends that the same guiding principle prescribed for AP course credit be exercised in the treatment of other NCCCS course credit awarded as part of the AA or AS degree under the CAA through other commonly recognized exams (e.g., IB, CLEP, Dantes, Cambridge).” This recommendation encourages receiving institutions to employ a consistent and transparent evaluation of course credit tests.

TAC Mission

Section IV, Letter A (Page 5) of the CAA defines the composition and authority of the TAC. However, as the concept and application of transfer continues to expand, the TAC is increasingly being asked to weigh in on and advise on all matters of transfer. Therefore, the TAC has added a sentence to this Mission: “The TAC will also provide general counsel and recommendations to the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and the University of North Carolina System in matters leading to optimal transfer between the two systems.” This statement broadens the scope of the TAC to lend expertise in a variety of transfer circumstances not explicitly outlined in the CAA.

UNC Director of Community College Partnerships

The UNC Director of Community College Partnerships (established in 2017) has been a welcome and critical addition to the operations of the TAC. This individual provides direction and oversight of all system-level transfer initiatives and performs the day-to-day activities related to transfer recruitment and admission policy, articulation and credit transfer policies (e.g., the CAA), partnership projects, and other related transfer initiatives. The goal is to increase transfer student enrollment system-wide, minimize barriers to a four-year postsecondary education, and maximize student success. This position is key to keeping the lines of communication open between the NCCCS and UNC System, as well as between the TAC and UNC institution transfer personnel. The UNC System is to be commended for both recognizing the growing importance of transfer in our state and in allocating the necessary resources to fund such a crucial position.

Communication

The dissemination of transfer information to appropriate personnel in a timely manner continues to be problematic, at both community colleges and UNC institutions. Adjustments by the TAC to the CAA are often not effectively communicated to transfer personnel and advisors working directly with students. To address this issue, the TAC is working with the NCCCS to develop a CAA-TAC web page that will contain CAA updates, TAC meeting minutes, and other pertinent transfer information. The expected launch of the page is fall 2018. In addition to the Campus Site Visit TAC forums, the TAC is also committed to delivering current and relevant transfer

information and updates in a variety of venues and formats throughout 2018-19, including the NCCCS conference, CTPA meetings, regional and state transfer workshops, and regional staff meetings (CAOs, Enrollment, Admissions, Registrars, Advisors, and others). These presentations and discussions will enable the dissemination of valuable information to transfer personnel from both systems and allow the TAC to better understand any concerns from the individuals who work most directly with transfer students.

Conclusion

The data outcomes and site visit reports attest to the positive impact the 2014 CAA is having on transfer student success. Both systems are committed to making sure that the CAA is working in the best interests of our students and our state. The results clearly indicate that the transfer partnership between the North Carolina Community College System and the University of North Carolina System is progressing and producing desired outcomes and that the 2014 CAA is serving students well and leading the way to seamless and efficient transfer. Importantly, the concept of transfer is expanding and offering students various pathways to associate and baccalaureate degree completion. The CAA, with its student protections and credit guarantees, is largely responsible for this expansion and the numerous transfer opportunities now available.

TAC Recommendations

- Require ACA 122 enrollment no later than second semester at the community college.
- Conduct a survey of community college advising practices.
- Centralize Baccalaureate Degree Plan management at the universities.
- Incentivize Associate Degree completion prior to transfer.
- Provide professional development for community college faculty and staff on career exploration, transfer student advisement, and academic planning.
- Educate students about the protections and guarantees of the CAA.
- Collect additional comparative data of UNC native students and NCCC transfer students.
- Provide funding for the TAC to hold regional and state-wide transfer workshops, as well as support in presenting the success of North Carolina transfer at national events.