

DATE: January 25, 2007

SUBJECT: Articulation Status Report

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Information

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The General Assembly determined that a higher education system that failed to allow the transfer of seemingly identical or similar courses increased the time to degree and cost to the student and the state. It was also the perception of the General Assembly that public higher education was not taking adequate steps to remedy the problem. Therefore, the legislature passed Public Chapter 795, Acts of 2000.

Public Chapter 795 requires the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to work with the University of Tennessee and Tennessee Board of Regents to:

- Create and have in place by the 2001 fall semester, a university tract program within UT and TBR consisting of sixty (60) semester hours of instruction within each major discipline that can be transferred and applied toward the requirements for a bachelor’s degree, thus allowing a student who has successfully completed the tract to enter the transferring institution as a junior
- Create an atmosphere that is conducive to transferability of credits among Tennessee’s public colleges and universities
- Report to the Joint Education Oversight Committee and the chairs of the chairs of the House and Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committees on the progress made toward full articulation on October 1 of each year

Improving articulation, ensuring seamless transfer, and increasing the persistence to graduation of transfer students is an on-going process for the Commission and the University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Board of Regents systems. While this coalition has made significant progress in achieving the aims of Public Chapter 795, it continues to refine major articulation measures and implement additional strategies for improving the transfer process. The following summary describes 2006 progress toward the objectives of the legislation.

“Create and have in place a university tract program”

The THEC adopted in 2000 a 60-hour module for associate degrees and a 120 semester hour requirement for the baccalaureate to facilitate efficient transfer. This provision clarifies transfer “blocks” to ensure that “any student who successfully completes the sixty-hour module may transfer to a public university and thereby meet the academic requirements for a bachelor’s degree for junior status.” To bring about greater ease of transfer within the modules, the Tennessee Board of Regents has established a 41-hour General Education Core common to all universities and university

parallel programs. The University of Tennessee campuses review their General Education requirements on a regular basis to promote efficient transfer within the UT system and to TBR institutions. To build on this successful attention to the General Education core as an articulation foundation, the two systems have accomplished the following during 2006:

- TBR has added significant provisions to assure the transferability of General Education courses. Students who complete blocks of the General Education subject categories (communications, humanities, social/behavioral sciences, history, natural sciences, and mathematics) and who transfer among TBR institutions are determined to have completed these requirements, thus avoiding any repetition of these courses.
- The TBR has created an advisory committee consisting of six university and six community college representatives to review changes in the General Education Core courses requested by institutions, thus ensuring commonality in requirements over time.
- The UT System is committed to equivalence in course transfer credit and credit earned by an enrolled UT student. Additionally, each UT campus maintains academic major program articulation agreements with participating community colleges.
- The TBR has established a task force to consider ways to address greater ease of transfer of Associate of Arts and Associate of Science non-General Education courses applied to the baccalaureate major by convening disciplinary groups to consider standard expectations for the 19 hours above the 41-hour General Education Core required for the 60-hour associate degree.

“Create an atmosphere that is conducive to transfer”

In responding to the second directive of the legislation, higher education has accomplished the following over the last year:

- Both the UT and TBR systems have made considerable progress in constructing transfer avenues in particular fields. Specifically, the TBR has a task force at work to address articulation of nursing programs (LPN to RN, RN to BSN).
- TBR has appointed a task force to refine the articulation of Tennessee Technology Center programs to the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) or certificate programs in community colleges.
- The UT System initiated a multi-phase review of all student fees as part of its strategic planning process. This set of activities is aimed at enhancing student access and improving student success, particularly for transfer students.
- All institutions in the UT and TBR systems have identified a high-level administrative office to be the central point of contact to coordinate the transfer process for students (both before transfer and after enrolling). This office acts

as liaison with other campuses, maintains and disseminates transfer/articulation agreements, and assists students with transfer processes.

2006 Transfer Profile:

The Transfer Profile depicts the impact that the many initiatives undertaken by the coalition of THEC, TBR, and UT toward achieving full articulation.

Continuation by A.A. and A.S. Degree Earners

- Of the 3,208 students who graduated from a Tennessee public community college with an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree in the 2005-06 academic year, 55.2 percent went on to enroll at a state university in Fall 2006. This represents a slight increase over Fall 2005, when the matriculation rate was 53.4 percent, and a large increase over Fall 2004 (46.3 percent).

“Reverse Cohort Analysis” of 2005-06 Bachelor’s Degree Recipients

- Among students who earned a bachelor’s degree from a Tennessee public university in 2005-06, over half (51 percent) started at an institution other than the one from which they graduated.

Snapshots of Fall 2006 Undergraduates

- In Fall 2006, 33.3 percent of the overall undergraduate population enrolled in Tennessee public universities had transferred at some point in their academic career. Transfer students constituted 20.5 percent of community college enrollment.
- The majority of these students with transfer credits (71.5 percent) came from public or private colleges within Tennessee, while 28.5 percent transferred from out-of-state institutions.

Conclusion:

Since the coalition of THEC, TBR, and UT implemented strategies to accomplish the objectives of the legislation, more students are experiencing successful transfer. It is likely that, in the coming years, additional State programs instituted after the legislation was enacted will also influence the transfer process. These programs include the Tennessee HOPE Scholarship Program and the State Dual Enrollment Grant Program. These programs will encourage students to persist to graduation, and their persistence is greatly supported by ease of transfer for students who elect to begin their education at one Tennessee institution and transfer to another under the provisions of the Tennessee HOPE. Furthermore, the effects of coherence in transfer of General Education requirements, greater commonality of learning outcomes for courses in the major, and improved articulation paths in specific degree majors should be seen in future annual reports.

Pursuant to T.C.A. §49-7-202(f) regarding articulation and the transferability of credits among Tennessee public institutions, this report will be submitted to the Legislative Oversight Committee by October 2007.