**COUNCIL OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

Executive Summary of Findings

**TRANSFER CREDIT AT FLORIDA COLLEGE SYSTEM INSTITUTIONS**

Summarized on Behalf of the Committee

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**Council of Student Affairs’ (CSA) Guidance to Council of Presidents:**  In consideration of the information contained herein, Florida College System institutions should review their policies and practices related to the transfer and transcripting of prior coursework.

**Rationale:** It is important to build a solid framework for advancing The Florida College System’s completion agenda by removing barriers to access and completion. Addressing the transfer of coursework in institutional policy in a more student-friendly way has the potential for removing an unintended barrier that has been common practice for years, but is not required by federal or state policy.

**Scope of Work:** After discussions on federal, state, and institutional policies that impact students’ access and completion, the CSA formed a volunteer work group to: 1) research federal aid policies and select institutional policies specific to transfer credit, and 2) present the findings to CSA and the Council of Presidents.

**Reason for Research on Transfer Credit:** The purpose of this research was to examine Florida College System institutions’ practices of bringing in credit and grades from ALL prior institutions attended and including passing and failing grades in the institution’s overall cumulative grade point average.

Broward College’s student affairs leadership raised an issue with this practice to CSA during a nuts and bolts session two years ago. CSA members who attended the session responded that this was a state practice/policy that went unchanged for many years. Broward College continued to research this issue and worked with its academic affairs leadership and faculty to change its transfer credit policy to mirror that of 85% of the nation’s colleges and universities. The Board of Trustees approved the policy in 2011 and began implementation in 2011-12.

**Florida History:** What was the source of the formalized practice for Florida College System institutions? The origin of this practice, which exists today in roughly 26 colleges, was determined in March 2012. The practice dates back to 1972, when an Articulation Committee was formed to look at the impact of open-admission institution students to selective state colleges and universities under the 2+2

articulation legislation. The committee was comprised of representatives from Florida public colleges and universities, with a lesser representation of community college registrars who felt the community college’s open access practices, including grade forgiveness, presented a less than quality academic record. Even though all colleges and universities, not just in Florida, require all students to submit their transcripts for all institutions attended, the community colleges agreed to put all this prior work on their transcripts and include it in the cumulative grade point averages for transfer students. What came from that 1972 meeting, as captured in the minutes, was the informal policy/practice that is still being used today.

This history explains why the registrars on that committee and successive registrars passed this practice down throughout this state, which brings us to the present: 40 years later, we are trying to remove this barrier for transfer students in The Florida College System. The 2+2 does not guarantee admission; it guarantees articulation and the transcript of all grades earned, including those in the cumulative grade point average, but does not address quality. In fact, there are other requirements in Florida Statute that have been implemented during the 40-year period since this articulation meeting that are layered on top of this practice and support quality transfer and readiness. Many institutions actively recruit transfer students from community colleges because of the success of our students entering at the junior level. Further, even when students directly enter state universities, they are oftentimes referred back to the community college to complete their associate degrees. Both practices are indicative of the value of community colleges in the educational system and support the notion that open access enrollment practices do not mean lack of quality.

**Research Findings:** Daytona State College changed its practices several years ago at the advisement of former registrar, Dr. Richard Pastor. Even though Broward College changed its policy without these historical specifics, two registrars from Polk State College and Hillsborough Community College continued to raise this issue and its impact on transfer students in The Florida College System. These registrars also conducted research of other colleges and universities and found the following:

Comparison/Contrast Community Colleges

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School** | **Accreditation** | **Transfer****GPA** | **SAP Policies** | **Transfer** **Criteria** | **Transcript****Policies** |
| **Michigan**DeltaCommunityCollege | NCA | No | Transfer Not used in academic progress/ use degree transfer hours calc for max. (150%)  | C- or better grade | No grades for transfer.Only degree applicable course equivalencies |
| **Indiana**IvyTech CC | NCA | No | Transfer hours are used for calc academic progress & max. (150%) | C- or better | No grades for transfer.Only degree applicable course equivalencies |
| **South** **Carolina**GreenvilleTech CC | SACS | No | Transfer Not used in academic progress/ use degree transfer hours calc for max. (150%)  | C or better grade | No grades for transfer credits. No policy for transfer of all or only those applicable to program of study.  |
| **Texas**DCCC | SACS | No | Transfer Not used in academic progress/ use degree transfer hours calc for max. (150%)  | C- or bettergrade  | No transfer credits are placed on the transcript; transfer hours calc. into total |
| **Tennessee**Volunteer State CC | SACS | survey taken in 2010 did not include this question | survey taken in 2010 did not include this question | C or better grade |  |
| **Alabama**Alabama Southern CCC | SACS | survey taken in 2010 did not include this question | survey taken in 2010 did not include this question | Will bring in a D if the student maintains the 2.00 GPA and needs it for the degree.  |  |
| **Arkansas**East Arkansas CC | NCA | survey taken in 2010 did not include this question | survey taken in 2010 did not include this question | C’s and above |  |
| **Kentucky**Somerset CCC | SACS | survey taken in 2010 did not include this question | survey taken in 2010 did not include this question | D’s and above only |  |

**Florida Department of Education:**

Florida Department of Education found nothing in statute or rule requiring the transfer of grades, with or without credit.

**American Association of College Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO):**

The AACRAO website was reviewed for best practices.  There was no best practice documentation or mandates indicating all grades should be transferred in and contributed to the cumulative GPA; however, there was an abundance of material about comparability and applicability, which leads one to believe that it is generally the practice to bring in courses that can COUNT toward the student record. In all the written material, it was assumed that only credit that counts toward a student’s degree is normally accepted.

In a 2004 AACRAO Grading Practices Report, results of a survey show over 83% of institutions bring in courses but only calculate the grades earned at the home institution.  This practice would dictate that only courses with a grade that can meet a requirement would be brought in.  (Found on page 3 of this survey: (<http://www2.aacrao.org/pro_development/surveys/Grades_and_Grading_Practices_Report_2004.pdf>)After much research of the Federal regulations regarding transfer credit and how an institution handles that credit, no correlation can be found that indicates that Federal Student Aid (FSA) regulations would dictate how an institution handles transfer credit. If this were the case, 83% of the institutions, including the state colleges and universities in Florida, would be out of compliance. The state universities do not transfer grades. Source: [http://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1112FSAHbkVol1Ch1.pdf](https://owa.broward.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=8825076ecbc242569388071c71f992b9&URL=http%3a%2f%2fifap.ed.gov%2ffsahandbook%2fattachments%2f1112FSAHbkVol1Ch1.pdf)

**Consequences of this Policy:** As the research shows, 83% of colleges and universities have transfer credit policies that bring in credit and not grades from other institutions attended. For 40 years, community colleges in Florida have been in the distinct minority in the practice of transferring in the grades and credit on transfer students’ academic record. Most Florida state universities do not have this practice—these institutions only accept in transfer grades of C or higher and do not calculate any prior academic grades into their institutional grade point average. However, Florida College System institutions bring in the credit and ALL grades A through F which has an impact on the student’s record, not only from their prior academic history, but for their current academic program at the Florida institution.

* F grades required repeatable program and general education requirements to have no grade points attached. Therefore, if a student transferred in one term from a prior institution, he/she would enter the Florida College System institution with a zero grade point average.
* Cumulative GPAs are not easily changed when they start at a deficit.
* Florida College System institutions record grades for courses that weren’t taught by the institution; however, the institution treats the work the same way. As a result, Florida College System institutions’ cumulative GPAs reflect grades recorded by faculty from accredited proprietary, private and public universities, of which no one can attest to the quality. Hence, the justification for why this practice should be questioned and overturned.