

The Pennsylvania State University

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**ASSESSMENT OF WASHINGTON STATE'S
ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS**

A Master's Paper in

Higher Education

by

David V. Colameco

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We approve the paper of David Colameco.

Date of Signature

John Cheslock
Associate Professor of Higher Education
Senior Research Associate
Director, Institutional Research Certificate Program
Paper Advisor

Frederick Loomis
Associate Professor of Higher Education
Coordinator, Institutional Research Certificate Program

Dorothy Evensen, In Charge
Graduate Programs in Higher Education
Professor of Higher Education
Senior Research Scientist

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the structure of Washington State's higher education system and its articulation agreements. Washington State has identified the shortcomings in its statewide higher education system and has taken steps to implement student centered change. The state legislature has strengthened the various statewide boards based upon the barriers they encounter and lessons learned from dissolved predecessor boards. The student centered approach adopted by the legislature is unique in that it sets up a framework to mandate change while also maintaining a level of autonomy for faculty and staff through working groups that affect the direction of change.

The higher education environment of Washington State will be examined within the context of best practices identified in literature focused upon student access to higher education through the various avenues available to them with a focus on articulation agreements that ease barriers to transfer. The state is moving in the right direction with its policies. Recommendations are made to ensure legislative intent is followed through with further legislative action and policies that further remove barriers to transfer.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AST	Associate Science Transfer
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CPE	Council for Postsecondary Education
CSU	California State University
DTA	Direct Transfer Agreement
E2SHB	Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill
ERDC	Educational Research and Data Center
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GED	General Educational Development
HB	House Bill
HECB	Higher Education Coordinating Boards
JHEC	Joint Higher Education Committee
MRP	Major Related Program
OFM	Office of Financial Management
UC	University of California
PLA	Prior Learning Assessment
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
SBCTC	Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SESRC	Social & Economic Sciences Research Center
WA	Washington State
WSAC	Washington State Achievement Council

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This paper examines the structure of Washington State's higher education system and its articulation agreements. Washington State has identified the shortcomings in its statewide higher education system and has taken steps to implement student centered change. More specifically the state has identified its citizens' participation in higher education as being "among the lowest in the nation" (E2SHB 2483.SL, p.3), and linked this lack of participation to state economic growth and citizen quality of life. The state has further recognized the barriers to effective change in the areas of articulation agreements and more broadly barriers to change within the statewide higher education system. Transfer agreements are a major component identified to increase access to a higher education credential for the state's population as a whole but more importantly to improve credential attainment for minorities and low income student groups.

The paper first broadly examines students, faculty and articulation agreements in Chapter 2. These key constituents shape articulation agreements through their unique set of needs. Chapter 3 will examine the structure of Washington State's higher education system, the implementation various transfer programs and the development of articulation agreements. Chapter 4 will provide recommendations for increasing transfer access and Chapter 5 will provide final thoughts and synthesis in a conclusion.

Chapter 2

Students, Faculty, Institutions and Articulation Agreements

This chapter will give a brief overview of the background and status of articulation agreements in the United States. Community colleges routinely adapt to the local needs of students, employers and local governments. These institutions are tied to their communities as their name implies. Along with local needs, State and Federal regulations also play a role in shaping curricula at community colleges. This chapter will focus on general background of the purposes of community colleges, the students who attend these colleges, community college faculty, history of articulation agreements, provide examples of articulation agreements, and finally discuss general improvements. This chapter's general background, combined with the discussion of Washington State's articulation agreements and transfer programs in Chapter 3, will form the basis for the analysis and recommendations for Washington State in Chapter 4.

History and Purpose of Community Colleges

Since 1901 when junior colleges were created, the purpose of these institutions has been to provide an avenue for transfer (Townsend, 2001, p.29). Over the decades since, junior colleges have expanded to help meet overall demand for higher education. Interest in enrolling in U.S. institutions of Higher Education swelled dramatically following the end of World War II during Geiger's 9th generation from 1945 to 1975 (Geiger, 2005, p.61). The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 provided the opportunity to these returning GIs to pursue higher education (Geiger, 2005, p.61). These GIs enrolled in higher education institutions in large numbers and subsequently their children provided for a second wave of enrollments in higher education in the 1960's. The larger four year institutions could not handle this influx of students in the 1960's and

became increasingly selective (Geiger, 2005, p.62). Small teachers colleges shifted their focus to this influx of students by becoming the first community colleges in addition to the rapid pace of one community college opening a week from 1965 to 1972 (Geiger, 2005, p.62).

Community colleges have traditionally had the purpose of educating students in preparation and transfer for a 4-yr degree (Bogart, 1985). Even today community colleges absorb a large portion of students entering higher education; about half, with a majority seeking transfer (Roksa, 2009, p.2445). The dozens, if not hundreds, of papers examining the transfer function of community colleges attest to its continued importance as a purpose of community colleges. With about half of students seeking transfer, one can conclude that the other half is utilizing another function of these community colleges. Personal enrichment and job skills account for 46 and 42 percent of community college student desires respectively (Goldrick-Rab, 2010, p.439). Students can change their minds and later shift their goals from enrichment and job skills to pursue a baccalaureate; “many students who enter community colleges begin their studies in occupational or technical programs and later decide to transfer” (Striplin, 2000, p.67).

Community colleges also respond to local needs through “contract education programs with specific businesses and industries” (Zusman, 2005, p.120). Community colleges also adapt to the varying needs of those for whom it serves, through the inclusion of correspondence courses, and broadcasting courses via video and digital communications (Gumpert, 2005, p.416). This community college purpose of adaptation to local needs creates a variety of courses which adds complexity during evaluation for transfer upon student request.

This evaluation for transfer and the issues that arise are the basis for forming articulation agreements; a process that has become highly political in some cases (Roksa, 2009, p.2445). As stated above students can change their goals, which further necessitate the transfer evaluation of all courses. A description of the students attending community colleges, followed by a discussion of policies aimed at strengthening the transfer purpose of the community college follows below.

Students and Their Goals

The community college draws students of all different backgrounds who seek out the institution as a gateway to four year institutions, source of enhancing job skills, and an avenue for personal enrichment. Students are examined below based upon age, enrollment status, gender, and socio-economic background. Overlap amongst these arbitrary groupings exist, however these delineations do help to better describe these students. Student characteristics combined with their transfer needs described later, are important to developing successful articulation agreements.

From the quality of age, community colleges enroll three general groupings of students from high school students seeking college credit (Twombly, 2008, p.5), to traditional undergraduate students directly out of high school, and lastly non-traditional adult students. Community college students, from any age group, could be seeking transfer credit as a way to save money (Montague, 2012, p.282). In a qualitative study, a student reported a savings of \$20,000 during two years of enrollment (Zinser, 2006, p.39). Students could also be seeking personal enrichment and improving their job skills as noted above. These different age groups can take varying course loads as would any student at a 4-yr institution. Community colleges have had a high percentage of part time enrollees, 64% in 1997. This flexibility in course load is beneficial to students with family and job responsibilities (Bryant, 2001, p.79). These students have different backgrounds and are taking various paths towards different goals.

In addition to course load, community college students vary with respect to gender, racial and ethnic qualities, aspirations and enrollment history at other institutions (Bryant, 2001). Demographics of community colleges are different than 4-yr institutions. Bryant quotes 58% of community college students are women (Bryant, 2001, p.81). Ethnic minorities make up 40% of undergraduate enrollment at two-year institutions compared to 33% in 4-year institutions (Goldrick-Rab, 2010, p.451). Due to this high representation of women and minorities, the

success of articulation agreements is important for strengthening upward mobility of those who are traditionally disadvantaged.

Student Transfer Characteristics

Transfers of credits occur in many various ways from the traditional vertical climb of high school to 2-yr to 4-yr, to reverse transfer from 4-yr to 2-yr, or a combination of co-enrollments. The number of college students using community college transfer for baccalaureate attainment is about half of all students, and not one quarter as assumed by some administrators (Cedja, 1999, p.7). The reasons for transferring credits are numerous, for example transfers for 2-yr college students to other 2-yr institutions can be due to life events such as moving (Townsend, 2001, p.33). This section will discuss the different transfer patterns exhibited by students.

Students can transfer from one institution to another with a “clean” demarcation in attendance at each institution, or they can maintain enrollment at multiple institutions generally known as co-enrollments. A discussion of non-co-enrollment transfers will be followed by a discussion of co-enrollment transfers. The majority of transfers from community colleges are to 4-year state institutions, with some transfers to 4-yr institutions going to elite private colleges (Morphew, 2001, p.1 and Cejda, 1999, p.1). However the opposite direction of transfer may occur; “reverse transfers” occur where students transfer from 4-yr institutions to community colleges; the percentage of students at various community college institutions who are reverse transfers “ can range from 3% to 65%” (Ignash, 2000, p.3 and Townsend, 1999, p.6).

Table 2-1 below lists the 6 types of transfer students discussed by Townsend (2001) along with reasons explicitly stated and alluded to in that paper. Community colleges have been associated with a “cooling off” function discussed by many; however Townsend discusses how

literature is pointing to a “warming-up” function. This warming up is the opposite of discouragement, here students get motivated to take on more education. The transferring of non-liberal arts credits could be due to “warming up,” with students changing their minds about a vocational or occupational degree and wanting to shift towards a liberal-arts education.

In Table 2-1 below I group the family and job responsibilities of Bryant discussed above into “Life-events.” The “reasons for transfer” category below is not comprehensive but rather a listing of the most likely reason. Any articulation agreement being developed or enhanced should consider all 6 transfer types and provide assistance for each.

Table 2-1. Transfer Patterns (Townsend, 2001)

	Transfer Type	Reasons for Transfer
1	Transferring to a four-year school before 2-yr degree completed	“Warm-up”
2	Transferring with non-liberal arts courses or programs	“Warm-up”
3	Transferring in a “swirling” pattern	Life-events
4	Transferring high school dual credit 2-yr college courses	Cost Savings
5	Transferring summer courses	Cost Savings, Flexibility
6	Transferring co-enrollment courses	Cost Savings, Flexibility

Let’s turn our discussion to co-enrollments. Some high school students co-enroll with community colleges while “never intending to enroll at the community college upon graduation”; these students simply want a head start on college credit (Townsend, 2001, p.34). In addition to the high school students co-enrolling, traditional and non-traditional college students also co-enroll at multiple institutions for cost savings or for the convenience of increased course availability (Wang, 2013, p.393). These co-enrollments by students primarily enrolled in 4-yr institutions include community college summer courses and courses taken at the same time as four-year college coursework (Townsend, 2001, p.31).

Students are primarily co-enrolled between 2-yr institutions, between 4-yr institutions, and a mix of 2-yr and 4-yr institutions which were found to be 9.5%, 22.5%, and 67.1% respectively of total co-enrollees, with only 20% of overall co-enrollments occurring during the summer (Wang, 2013, p.396). Studies have also found that 4-yr students who co-enroll experience greater benefits, such as being about 2.6 times more likely to persist to degree completion than 4-yr non co-enrollees (Wang, 2013, p.396). 2-yr students who co-enroll also see a benefit, but slightly less with persistence 2.3 times higher than 2-yr non co-enrollees (Wang, 2013, p.396). Benefits of degree attainment were positive for 4-yr co-enrollees, but “not as positive” for 2-yr co-enrollees (Wang, 2013, p.399).

An interesting category of student transfer patterns discussed by Townsend were “swirlers.” These are students with multiple transfers which can occur in numerous combinations of transfers such as 2-yr to 2-yr to 4-yr, or 2-yr to 4-yr to 2-yr as two examples. In this case life events may be a reason for additional transfers found within transfer patterns; such as “outmigration of students fleeing economically depressed areas” (Higgins, 1999, p.16).

Community College Faculty

Community college faculty play a large role in articulation agreements and their dedication and availability are vital to forming lasting articulation agreements. Faculty, from both 4-yr and 2-yr institutions, routinely discusses course content and ways to improve courses for increased student success. The goal of all articulation agreements is a smoother transition during transfer (Morphew, 2001, p.12). Morphew discusses several accounts of faculty playing a huge role in articulation agreements through visits and subsequent relationships built on trust (Morphew, 2001, p.11-14). This section will briefly discuss faculty.

Demographically, two thirds of community college faculty is employed part time (Twombly, 2008, p.11). These faculty are made up equally of men and women, who primarily teach, work about 49 hours a week compared to 52 and 55 hours for liberal arts colleges and research universities respectively (Twombly, 2008, p.13-14). Positions usually require no formal teaching preparation and others require experience over academic credentials for vocational and technical fields (Twombly, 2008, p.15).

Studies on community college faculty commonly have “comparisons [that] often render the community college, its students, and its instructors as deficient” (Twombly, 2008, p.8). This view of deficiency by 4-yr institutions is an obstacle to forming strong articulation agreements. Two year faculty take offense to this subordinate position by 4-yr representatives when making articulation agreements because it represents being judged as inadequate and being told what to teach (Powers, 1977, p.17). To overcome this judgment a principle of “parity” must be accepted or worked towards, where courses, students and instructors from community colleges are viewed equally to their 4-yr counterparts (Ignash, 2000, p.2). Once a mutual respect is built the improvements to course content and instruction can take place in a smoother fashion.

Articulation Agreement Background

The reasons for articulation agreements, some of their history, and benefits are discussed in this section. Examples of agreements, measuring their success and ways to improve agreements are discussed in sections that immediately follow. The students, their multiple transfer patterns, and faculty who develop unique courses, each present dimensions of complexity for articulation agreements. This complexity leads to foreseen and unforeseen hardships during the transfer process. To overcome these hardships, agreements are put into place to ease the transition. Roksa restates the definition of articulation well: “articulation encompasses all

institutional and state policies and practices aimed at facilitating the flow of students between postsecondary institutions (Roksa, 2009, p.2447). The benefits of these agreements are well known; articulation agreements smooth transfers by “reduc[ing] bureaucratic and administrative entanglements as well as redundancy in credits accrued toward a degree” (Montague, 2012, p.284). Articulation agreements provide “new avenues of academic opportunity ...” (O’Meara, 2007, p.9), are seen as an integral component of student success (Henry, 1994, p.33), and can even be seen as integral to improving the lack of cultural diversity at elite institutions through community college transfers (Dowd, 2008, p.449).

The focus of articulation agreements is typically on community colleges because they are central to setting up articulation agreements as they “occupy a unique position within a network of educational institutions that enables them to work both with high schools and 4-yr universities” (Kisker, 2007, p.299). Articulation agreements are both voluntary and state enforced (Roksa, 2008, p.236). These agreements have been implemented statewide for almost 50 years; the first statewide transfer agreement was approved by Florida in 1965 (Bogart, 1985, p.18). California did overhaul its statewide system of institutions in 1960 but this overhaul was not a set of agreements between independent institutions. These state policies are often highly political and thus focus on credit preservation and not directly on improving transfer (Roksa, 2008, p.242). Despite state agreement weaknesses they are numerous; 79% of states responding to surveys had articulation agreements (Ignash, 2000, p.5).

Unfortunately occupational program transfer is not typically part of articulation agreements (Zinser, 2006, p.29). This problem has elevated itself to the national level and caused the federal government to step in. For example the 1991 Perkins Act threatened to withhold federal funding if Tech Prep programs were omitted from articulation agreements (O’Meara, 2007, p.11). Another way the federal government has stepped in is through the National Science Foundation and its Advanced Technology Centers, which are mostly found on community college

campuses; these centers have aided in the development of articulation agreements (Henderson, 2012, p.10).

States such as Washington recognize the importance of technical skills. Demand from employers exists for students with baccalaureate degrees and applied skills in areas such as Pre-School Teachers, Paraeducators, Interpreters for the Deaf, and Chemical Dependency Professionals (WA SBCTC, 2005, p.6-8). The state estimates that overall transfers need to increase from 10% to 30% to meet demand (WA SBCTC, 2005, p.11).

Examples of Agreements

This section will showcase some examples of agreements in more detail. An in-depth discussion of agreements in Washington State is left for Chapter 3. In addition to the 1965 statewide transfer agreement in Florida, other states have followed with their own agreements. Ohio mandated 2-yr to 4-yr transfer in 1990 and went further in 2005 to include technical courses and programs (Chase, 2011, p.389). Texas mandated transfer of 2-yr to 4-yr credits in 2007 (Chase, 2011, p.389). Transfer agreements can be shaped by states by “designating community colleges as branches of 4-yr institutions, encouraging development of cooperative agreements, instituting a common core of courses, and developing a common course numbering system” (Roksa, 2009, p.2454).

As previously mentioned, California implemented a statewide Master Plan in 1960 to “bring order to the state’s system of higher education” but this plan has been viewed as both beneficial and problematic (Striplin, 2000, p.71). Under this system only community colleges can award 2-yr degrees, bachelor’s degrees at state colleges and the University of California, and doctorate degrees at the University of California. General education requirements are outlined by the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (Striplin, 2000, p.72). Information is

disseminated to students in the form of lists of classes eligible for transfer to California State University.

Florida, Ohio, Texas and California are examples of non-voluntary agreements; the state legislatures felt that higher educational inaction warranted statewide regulation. Institutions can enter into agreements amongst themselves both in states with broad regulation and in states without. Two examples of community colleges that have agreements with four year selective private institutions are presented by Morpew in Florida and California. In Florida, the Miami-Dade Community College honors program has transferred students to “New York University, McGill University, Brown University, Lehigh University, Smith College, Hampshire College, and the University of Virginia” with the students transferring to Smith benefiting from a pre-existing transfer agreement (Morpew, 2001, p.7). In California, Santa Monica College transfers students to “Georgetown, Smith, Stanford, and Pepperdine”, like Miami-Dade this institution also has an articulation agreement with Smith College (Morpew, 2001, p.8). These agreements with Smith College took faculty efforts at each institution, coordinated student visits, and “the relationships constructed over time between staff members at the different institutions (Morpew, 2001, p.11-13). Under these agreements “dozens of students ... have transferred to Smith and graduated.” (Morpew, 2001, p.16).

In Southern California the transfer partnership between an unnamed public research university and some surrounding community colleges was analyzed qualitatively (Kisker, 2007, p.286). This agreement set up “accelerated remedial sequences for underprepared students” and tutors (Kisker, 2007, p.289). Faculty at the community college didn’t immediately buy into the need for tutors as much as the university did. A give and take occurred where “university administrators modified their approach to sustain the partnership” (Kisker, 2007, p.290). By working together a strong relationship based on trust is built and required for agreement sustainability (Kisker, 2007, p.298). The work conducted allowed for a greater focus on

improving the transfer process itself and provided more awareness to both faculty and students of its importance.

Measuring the Success of Articulation Agreements

Measuring the success of articulation agreements is difficult; what is considered a success? States are not uniform in what they require for data reporting leading to limited data availability (Roksa, 2008, p.249), this makes national longitudinal studies impossible. This has led to numerous studies without common standards of measure which leads to difficulty in measuring articulation agreement success. The federal government could help through mandated reporting (Roksa, 2009, p.2466). Data tracking students from K-12 to institutions of higher education do not exist in most states (Goldrick-Rab, 2010, p.445). Nationwide data is needed to assess the efforts undertaken (Goldrick-Rab, 2010, p.458).

Common measures need to be adopted whether they be focused on student success or institutional success. For student success time-to-degree, cost, and quality of 2-yr courses are suggested measures (Townsend, 2001, p.36-37). Put in a similar way, success should be measured by “(a) number of credits transferred, (b) time to a bachelor’s degree, and (c) completion of a bachelor’s degree (Roksa, 2008, p.248). Increased diversity at private institutions such as Smith College from its community college transfers is considered a success (Morphew, 2001, p.10). Increasing transfers from lower SES quintiles can be a measure of success given the lack of diversity in elite institutions (Dowd, 2008, p.461 and Roksa, 2009, p.2469). For institutional success the measure could be fewer vacancies; selective institutions with higher attrition rates and a greater number of degree programs can benefit from transfers because they fill vacant positions and excess capacity (Cheslock, 2005, p.265, 272-273).

The measures of articulation agreement success are mixed; some positive and some negative. Many articles point out the areas for improvement, such as transfer gaps between 2-yr transfer students and non-transfer students. One study points out that only 72.6% and 61.7% of non-liberal arts courses transferred to the CSU and UC systems in California respectively and that gap had widened from 1991 to 1998 (Striplin, 2000, p.76). Another combines shortcomings with a possible silver lining by stating that among Ohio students 17 to 20, after a 6 and 9 year period those who entered higher education through community college “had a significantly smaller likelihood of degree receipt (Long, 2009, p.40). This shortcoming may be due to the increased attendance flexibility in programs at community colleges, however the benefit of cost savings may outweigh the degree attainment penalty (Long, 2009, p.46-47).

Other studies show equivalent completion rates but with work remaining to transfer more credits; Roksa found that articulation agreements have no effect on 4-yr degree completion and the time to complete remained the same at 5.5 years (Roksa, 2008, p.245), however students transferring the most credits are worse off (Roksa, 2008, p.246). Focusing on student qualities and state qualities Higgins finds positive results. In a study of rural community college students it was found that students under 25 and adults with a high school diploma were positive qualities for attainment of a baccalaureate via transfer (Higgins, 1999, p.10). Legally mandated articulation led to transfer rates that were higher than voluntary articulation rates with about 23% and 14% respectively (Higgins, 1999, p.20). Though the quantitative data is mixed, qualitatively it is understood that reaching out correct transfers is a worthy endeavor.

General Areas of Improvement for Articulation Agreements

The areas of improvement for articulation agreements involve everyone from students, faculty, and governments. In addition state governments need to play a greater role in facilitating articulation agreements; state efforts are uneven (Ignash, 2000, p.17) with state agreements helping or hindering students (Chase, 2011, p.393). Current articulation agreements could benefit from “improved information and greater flexibility (Powers, 1977, p.21).

Table 2-2 below presents common strengths of articulation agreements found throughout the literature and found in this discussion.

Table 2-2. Best Practices (Montague, 2012)

1)	Cooperative Collaboration among Knowledgeable Representatives is Essential
2)	2-Yr and 4-Yr Faculty Should Approach Articulation as Equal Partners in Establishing Curricula that is Transferrable ...
3)	Determine What Type of Agreement is Prescribed and How It Can Best Serve the Needs of the Participating Institutions.
4)	Adopt a Student-Centered Approach
5)	Consider Dual-Track Curricula Where Practical
6)	Active Engagement on the Part of Faculty and Administrators via Advisory Boards
7)	Make Articulation Agreement Information Widely Accessable to Students, Faculty, and Administrators
8)	Articulation Agreements Should be Viewed as Both a Process and a Relationship
9)	Establish Routine Assessments of Agreements Utilizing Data in Accordance with Institutional Needs.

From an institution and faculty perspective, partnerships between 2-yr and 4-yr institutions should start with the recognition that problems exist on both sides (Kisker, 2007, p.289). One study pointed out that in hindsight “partnership participants wish there had been more collaboration in the way the partnership was set up and managed” (Kisker, 2007, p.291).

Furthermore, there is a need to acknowledge time constraints when setting up agreements as community college faculty invest time without additional compensation (Kisker, 2007, p.293). Kisker also noted in one example that time was spent educating community college faculty on the benefits of the Universities tutoring program. This unanticipated time spent may reveal the need for workshops covering common shortfalls that need to be overcome in articulation agreements. These workshops should be in-depth and not less beneficial single day workshops (Goldrick-Rab, 2010, p.449).

Articulation agreements need to focus on students and their transfer issues. Community colleges that concentrate in certificates negatively affect educational attainment (Roksa, 2006, p.514) therefore they should provide guidance to those interested in transfer to lessen this disadvantage. Students should be exposed to career-related courses early in their first year and these potentially vocational courses should be transferable (Nitecki, 2011, p.117). Full time attendance and remedial courses are important. Students taking more of a full time course load and those in an academic degree program are more likely to transfer (Dougherty, 2006, p.478). Students passing “the first college-level math course [were] 4.3 times as likely to transfer as an academically unprepared student who did not pass” (Roksa, 2010, p.280).

Many of the best practices discussed in this chapter form the basis for the Washington State system of articulation agreements and transfer programs. Programs have been set up to address almost all of the concerns discussed in this chapter. The next chapter will discuss the higher education system in Washington State and the various avenues students have to enter higher education and transfer credits as they navigate the system towards earning their credential.

Chapter 3

System of Higher Education in Washington State

The State of Washington recognizes that its system of education from K-12 to graduate programs is not achieving the desired results in terms of quantity and diversity of earned degrees. Washington State citizens' participation in higher education is "among the lowest in the nation" (E2SHB 2483.SL, 2012, p.3). To seek answers as to why the system is not optimal and to improve the outcomes of students, the legislature passed House Bill 2483 in 2012. This bill is not a newly found focus on higher education in the State of Washington, rather it is a well thought out bill which contains many of ideas discussed in Penn State's Higher Education Program and the literature review of Chapter 2.

This chapter will discuss the ongoing efforts in Washington State to improve its system of higher education. These efforts will be discussed along with the state's findings of problems and progress. The students of Washington State, their transfer characteristics, the state's transfer agreements, and measurements of success will remain the focus. A brief history of state efforts, the latest state efforts in new legislation, and the state boards and their findings are presented below.

History of Statewide Boards in Washington

Washington State is in its 5th decade of having a statewide higher education coordinating board. As discussed in Chapter 2, the 1960's were a decade of expansion in higher education as the baby boomers entered higher education. Like California with its Master Plan of 1960 and Florida's Articulation Agreement of 1965, Washington State was examining its system

of higher education. From 1965 to 1969 a blue ribbon commission in Washington State examined the then current system. The commission included “the governor, legislators, educators, and members of the general public” (Mayfield, 2002, p.41). The findings of this commission resulted in the formation of the Council on Higher Education in 1969. This Council was a compromise between centralized state control of higher education and “the then present arrangement of decentralized and voluntary institutional relationships” (Mayfield, 2002, p.41).

The council was designed to review and recommend to the legislature on issues of higher education that related to budgeting, policies, and the creation of new degree programs. The legislature would back up the council when making its recommendations such that the recommendations “were tantamount to approval” (Mayfield, 2002, p.42). The council also developed a 6-year plan in 1975, which has been followed up with multiple other long-term plans by other boards since, up to the current 2008 10-year plan.

In 1975 The Council on Higher Education was transformed into the Council for Postsecondary Education (CPE) following changes undertaken to comply with legislation passed by the U.S. Congress, Higher Education Amendments of 1972. The new federal law “required states to establish or designate single state postsecondary education planning agencies in order to qualify for federal planning and other funds” (Mayfield, 2002, p.42). The role of the CPE was thus expanded from its predecessor into making policy decisions which required oversight. This oversight required further expansion of the CPE.

During the 1980’s it was found that the CPE was not meeting the needs of Washington State. The CPE was flawed in that it was an advisory board like its predecessor. In 1985 the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) was established (Mayfield, 2002, p.44). “The new HECB was given approval authority in almost every important particular. It was rendered into a very strong coordinating board with virtual regulating authority” (Mayfield, 2002, p.44). The HECB would continue to review policies and perform analysis as its predecessor had done,

however the HECB would also develop standards, rules, and agreements between higher education institutions within the State of Washington and with its neighboring states and British Columbia (Mayfield, 2002, p.46). Even with this powerful board, the State of Washington has lagged behind in higher education performance. These poor results led to the state legislature overhauling the state board once again in 2012 through student focused legislation aimed at increased degree attainment through the removal of current barriers to degree completion; Washington State House Bill 2483 abolishes the HECB and creates the Student Achievement Council.

Washington State House Bill 2483

Following the history of re-evaluating the state board as outlined above, the legislature again revisited the state of higher education in Washington State and recognized that the participation rate in higher education of its citizens was “among the lowest in the nation” (E2SHB 2483.SL, p.3). In response the Washington State legislature drafted and passed House Bill 2483 in 2012 “to create the student achievement council to provide the focus and propose the goals for increasing educational attainment including improving student transitions from secondary to postsecondary education and training and between and among postsecondary institutions” (E2SHB 2483.SL, p.2).

The legislature acknowledges the importance of education beyond K-12 for its citizens and directly links higher education to “maintaining the health of a democratic society” and the “well-being” of the state’s citizens (E2SHB 2483, p.2). In addition, the legislature acknowledges the need to increase the numbers of students attaining advanced degrees due to “the large and growing gap between education requirements and achievement” (E2SHB 2483.SL, p.3).

To address the gaps sighted above, the law creates The Student Achievement Council to replace the Higher Education Coordinating Board. House Bill 2483 is far reaching in its design of a concerted effort towards increased degree attainment in Washington State. The law calls for a “Major Expansion” to build new institutions and repurpose existing ones. The previous boards didn’t keep up with environmental changes, therefore adaptation is written into the law as part of the councils mission (E2SHB 2483.SL, p.6). Table 3-1 below highlights some of the key areas of House Bill 2483 as they relate our discussion on articulation agreements within the framework of the Washington State higher education oversight structure.

Table 3-1. RCW Chapter 28B and Washington State House Bill 2483

RCW 28B	HB 2483 Section	Description of Selected Sections
77.001	1	Legislatures General Findings on Importance of Higher Education
77.005	101	Sets up rules for Assigning Council’s Members
77.020	104	Council Goals, Research, Assessments, Standards
77.070	110	Council Identifies Budget Priorities in Line with 10-Year Plans
77.080	111	Assessment of Programs and Courses, Centers of Excellence, Review Proposals
77.210	113	Adoption of Statewide Transfer and Articulation Policies
77.215	114	Statewide Transfer Policy: Student Centered and Parity of Students/Credits
77.090	115	Accountability, Required Data Gathering and Reporting, Use of Dashboards
77.230	116	Annual Collaboration with Other State Boards and Councils
45.080	535	Performance Measures Related to Transfer from 2-Yr to 4Yr Institutions
50.820	538	Expansion of Baccalaureate Attainment through 2-Yr/4-Yr Partnerships

The law as it relates to the Student Achievement Council specifically addresses numerous state issues and goals in great detail. The law calls for the council to expand its policy analysis to not only utilize resources both nationally and internationally but to also become a resource “in facilitating educational attainment and education system development” (E2SHB 2483.SL, p.6). The law further calls for a 10-year plan which addresses the following goals: strategic planning of goals, expansion of student access, coordination of budgets with state goals, improved system design, improved student transitions, conducting of statewide institutional research, student preparedness before and after higher education, increased diversity, increased innovation, and “relevant policy research” (E2SHB 2483.SL, p.7-8).

The law covers many topics which are tangentially important to articulation agreements such as budgeting and setting admission standards. Table 3-1 above highlights three areas directly related to increasing transfers between 2-Yr and 4-Yr institutions. The research that the council sponsors is important to articulation agreements in that the research measures the success of the programs. The research of the HECB and the new council will be examined in later sections of this chapter.

The Joint Higher Education Committee, highlighted legislation in Table 3-2, is a direct link for the Student Achievement Council to the state legislature and seeks to correct a shortcoming of previous boards by further strengthening the legitimacy and power of the council.

Table 3-2. RCW Chapter 44 and Washington State House Bill 2483

RCW 44	HB 2483 Section	Description of Selected Sections
04.201	201	Establishment of the Joint Higher Education Committee
04.202	202	Sets up Rules for Assigning Committee Members
04.205	205	Committee is Part of the Legislative Branch

Washington's Ten Year Plan

The legislation discussed above required the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to deliver a ten year plan to the legislature by December of 2013. The Council's report focuses on three main areas: "Ensure Access Actions," "Enhance Learning Actions," and "Prepare for Future Challenges Actions" (WSAC, 2013a, p.1), each of which will be discussed in detail below. Overall the plan focuses on "increasing educational attainment" which is included in the title of their Roadmap. The Council views education and job skills attained through education as key to improving the financial health and well-being of both the state and its citizens. Articulation agreements can help Washington State achieve these goals in various ways which will be highlighted in the following discussion.

By 2023, the completion date of the current 10-year plan, the council has two goals; first that "All adults in Washington will have a high school diploma or equivalent" and second that "at least 70 percent of Washington adults will have a postsecondary credential" (WSAC, 2013a, p.2). As discussed in Chapter 2, community colleges draw in students of all different backgrounds. Community colleges offer GED programs and through their traditionally open door policies serve as an excellent starting point for adult students seeking to continue their higher education. Strong articulation agreements will increase the educational options and degree completion rates of these students by removing barriers and easing the transfer process to four year institutions.

The ten year plan goes on to focus on three main areas of focus. The first "Ensure Access" focuses on common barriers to entry such as cost, entering student preparedness, increasing dual-credit and dual-enrollment programs of high school students, and to increase support to students. This student centered focus is integral to the success of any program seeking to improve student outcomes as discussed in Chapter 2. The council seeks to streamline the dual-enrollment programs which vary significantly across the state by creating a state-wide enrollment

system (WSAC, 2013a, p.12). High school students have many options, from courses taught by high school teachers to courses taken at 2-yr and 4-yr institutions. The council recognizes the difficulty high school students have in comparing programs to find the program best suited to their needs. Therefore the council seeks to present a comprehensive overview to potential students that clearly state the “process, requirements, fees and approaches to applying credit toward post-secondary education” (WSAC, 2013a, p.12). While not all post-secondary credit is awarded at post-secondary institutions, expansion of this enrollment system will require stronger articulation agreements for processing and accepting these credits.

The second focus, “Enhance Learning” focuses on aligning post-secondary education with the needs of Washington State’s economy. Washington State faces a skills gap where jobs are available but unable to be filled by qualified applicants. In a time when Washington State graduates are facing a slow economy opening opportunities to employment is essential to the well-being of graduates and the state as a whole. Students who attain skills leading to employment will become more productive members of society. The council seeks to increase employer feedback and the responsiveness of institutions to this feedback (WSAC, 2013a, p.19). Along with institutional responsiveness to employers, the council seeks increased responsiveness to students with some post-secondary credits who are seeking a credential. The council seeks to encourage adults to obtain credentials through advertising. These students will bring a wide array of credits with them for transfer evaluation. Efficiently evaluating these credits without leaving credits behind requires a solid framework of articulation agreements.

The third focus, “Prepare for Future Challenges” also focuses on employer and student needs. The need for expansion is discussed and includes new programs, dual-credit coursework and competency based assessment (WSAC, 2013a, p.28). These solutions will require evaluation of these potentially new and different credits upon a student’s request for transfer.

Competency Based Transfers

The 10 year plan and House Bill 2483 focus heavily on increasing the quantity of access to institutions of higher education. It should be noted that the quality of education students are transferring has been a focus implemented in previous legislation. To ensure that access to upper levels of higher education through transfers maintains quality with increased quantity, the state has focused on competency based transfers since 2003 with the passage of House Bill 1909. Competency based transfer focuses more on a student's level of knowledge over the number of credits earned (HECB, 2006b, p.1). The top-down approaches of some states, and arguably some of the transfer programs enacted by Washington State, focus on preventing the loss of credits. These transfer programs typically state that an associate's degree is equivalent to the first two years at a four year institution no matter what the credits are. While this approach will smooth out the application process of transfer, any lack of competencies will lead to future student hardship in their 3rd and 4th year classes due to a weak education foundation.

To combat the problem of simply focusing on the credit totals for transfer the state commissioned three separate working groups of various faculty in different disciplines to assess the competency levels of 3rd year students entering a program of study from 2-yr transfers and their 4-yr counterparts. These working groups of faculty not only discussed competencies for testing purposes, but the faculty of 2-yr institutions also worked with their 4-yr colleagues to strengthen the 2-yr institution's programs by identifying areas of weakness for future improvement.

The HECB conducted a learning assessment study of 2-yr and 4-yr students entering 4-yr programs in Criminal Justice, Computer Information Systems, and Elementary Education. Each program completed the assessment in slightly different ways which highlights the complexity in

achieving statewide assessment consistency. The Computer Information Systems 4-yr program was previously conducting assessments of student competencies through a program placement exam. At the time of the working group the program was undergoing an accreditation review. The program focused on rewriting course descriptions and competencies to align with national standards. The working group was in the process of passing these new standards onto community colleges to better inform potential transfer students of transfer requirements (HECB, 2006b, p.8).

The Criminal Justice program established a list of competencies and implemented an assessment test. The testing results showed that transfer students lacked competencies held by their 4-yr institution peers in areas of statistics and research methods (HECB, 2006b, p.5). The working group found that students who passed the competency exam had taken more courses in social science and math leading to the recommendation that these criminal justice competencies be included in current pre-requisite coursework and self-study options (HECB, 2006b, p.5).

The Elementary Education Program developed a set of key competencies but did not implement assessments as the previous two programs had. Each program's working group identified "Barriers" to competency assessment implementation and barriers to the working group itself. A key issue expressed by each program was that these working groups were unfunded by the legislation. The Elementary Education Program identified language differences between definitions used by the program educators and the legislation itself (HECB, 2006b, p.7). This highlights the importance of feedback from faculty and staff at the institutions to any legislative initiative if it is going to succeed.

The pilot project was viewed positively by the participants. A high value was placed upon clearly identifying required program competencies. General education competencies were purposefully not studied by each program due to the expense and a lack of funding. The project further recommends developing general education competencies, increasing line of communication between 2-yr and 4-yr institutions, and for 4-yr institutions to develop a clear set

of program entry requirements for potential transfer students. This project highlighted the need for increased funding to implement consistent competency based student assessments within single programs and more importantly implied difficulty in statewide implementation.

The lessons learned in this project pointed to the need for more focus, resources, and broader implementation appear in later state legislation such as HB 2483 discussed earlier. In addition the state legislature has appropriated funding for the assessment of credit for prior experience and learning outside of the traditional classroom. These efforts are discussed next.

Credit for Prior Learning

As part of increasing access to Washington State students, the state legislature has also focused on awarding credit for prior learning in legislation passed in 2011. Credit for prior learning was established in 2011 in RCW 28B.77.230 (WSAC, 2013b, p.1) and was amended with through Bill 2483 in 2012 to include more cooperation amongst state boards of higher education. The Achievement Council's focuses on "prior learning in the workplace, military, and through other life experiences" because it "can have positive effects on college affordability, institutional capacity and opportunities for change" (WSAC, 2013b, p.1). Each of these positive effects is sought in the State's 10 year plan discussed above.

The goal of the Council is to assess the current processes for granting prior learning credit on a statewide level to track trends and make improvements. The council finds that all higher education institutions in Washington assess prior learning in one form or another (WSAC 2013b, p.2). A prior learning assessment (PLA) work group has been established by the Council composed of 70 members to improve this assessment process. The PLA work group's goals are directly in line with the State's 10 year plan and involve increasing prior learning credit to more students, in larger amounts and in variety of learning eligible for credit. To accomplish these

goals the work group also focusses on tasks to “develop transparent policies” that are widely available to all faculty and staff to enable greater PLA. Focus is also given to improving current assessment practices (WSAC, 2013b, p.3-6).

The work group found three general modes of PLA are implemented in Washington State: portfolios, exams and “cross-walks.” Cross-walks are agreements between industry and institutions of higher education which enable transfer of industry training such as law enforcement academy training transfers to criminal justice degrees, military medic training transfers to nursing programs, and apprenticeship training to occupational trade degrees to name a few (WSAC, 2013b, p.6).

Chapter 2 revealed that student transfer data nationwide is of a mixed nature which makes nationwide comparisons difficult. The lack of uniform data exists in Washington as well; the states database does not have “discrete data elements ... to enable tracking of PLA progress at public baccalaureate institutions” (WSAC, 2013b, p.4). To track PLA trends statewide, the group is working to develop uniform assessment definitions. The lack of these definitions made it “virtually impossible to track PLA in Washington” (WSAC, 2013b, p.3). Once definitions are in place the ability to increase and monitor PLA will take place. Draft state-wide PLA policies are being reviewed by all institutions of higher education in Washington State. Additionally the work group has led to institutions improving their websites to more easily disseminate PLA practices and improvements. These are important steps in achieving policy transparency and increases in student access to higher education.

Transfer for K-12 Students Enrolled in Higher Education

High school students can take advantage of various programs designed to award transferrable higher education credit “such as Running Start, College in the High School,

Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate programs ...” (HECB, 2009a, p.21). This section will focus on the Running Start initiative which represents a transfer agreement between Washington’s higher education institutions and local high schools statewide. Running Start enables capable high school students who possess a minimum high school GPA and parental consent in the 11th and 12th grades to take some or all of their high school credits at a community college. The credits earned at the community college are college credits which are also double counted towards the credit requirements for high school graduation. These academic achievers are given access to more rigorous coursework which is paid for by the high school district and can allow a student to complete their first two years of college while in high school.

The Running Start program was started in 1990 and has grown to include 18,604 students (12,717 FTEs) in the 2011-2012 school year (SBCTC, 2012, p.1, 4) and 19,053 students (13,544 FTEs) in 2012-2013 (SBCTC, 2013, p. 20, 21). For comparison, in the 2012-2013 academic year “3,565 students were served in College in the High School, a 12 percent increase from the previous year. The number of students participating in alternative high school programs offered at colleges increased 5 percent to 3,671 students” (SBCTC, 2013, p.15). This is significant given that Washington State’s total state funded FTE enrollment in 2008-09 was 245,128 (HECB, 2009a, p.21). Furthermore of the participating college districts, Running Start enrollments accounted for 8.3% of total college district FTE enrollments (SBCTC, 2012, p.10).

Not only do high schools count the college credits towards graduation, but the state legislature has granted community colleges the ability to award high school diplomas. Students enrolled in the head start program were predominantly female, 59%, with more than half attending the higher education institution full time, 52%, and about a quarter were students of color, 26% (SBCTC, 2012, p.9). The representation of minorities is directly proportional to their representation of 24.6% in the overall population in high school for the high school class of 2008

(HECB, 2008b, p.5). The running start program is clearly one avenue of addressing minority underrepresentation in enrollments.

Transfer among Higher Education Institutions

Washington State recognizes that its statewide policies have been focused on vertical transfer patterns, discussed in Chapter 2. The 2013 Transfer Report addresses this shortfall by focusing on alternative transfer directions such as horizontal, reverse and swirling transfer patterns (WSAC, 2013c, p.2). Vertical transfer refers to a more “traditional” 2-yr to 4-yr transfer of credits, horizontal refers to 2-yr to 2-yr and 4-yr to 4-yr, reverse refers to 4-yr to 2-yr transfer, and swirling refers to combinations of the previous (See Student Transfer Characteristics, Chapter 2). Transfer of credits from 2-yr to 4-yr institutions were performed by 35% of 4-yr graduates in June of 2012 which closely matches the 37% of students who intend to transfer in 2012 (WSAC, 2013c, p.3, 4). This number can be misleading because not all students who transfer graduate; in the 2009-2010 school year only about 1 in 6 (18,946 of 113,358) students intending transfer actually do so (HECB, 2011b, p.7, 8). Historically between about 1 in 6 to about 1 in 5 community college students transferred in the academic years of 1997-1998 to 2007-2008 (HECB, 2009b, p.11). This is partly due to the “cooling-off” function discussed in Chapter 2, however it shows a large gap in between students initial intentions and final actions with regards to transfer. Of the 2-yr institution students that transfer about 72% complete 4-yr degrees within 3 years (HECB, 2011b, p.13). Barriers to transfer must be identified and mitigated. Lack of information and a streamlined process are both addressed with the improvements below discussed below.

The state has focused on improving transfer rates by developing “two statewide agreements, the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) and the Associate of Science-Transfer”

(WSAC, 2013c, p.2). These DTAs are the result of state legislation passed in 2004 to provide “clearer pathways” and improve state-wide coordination to improve transfer rates (HECB, 2009b, p.7). Specifically these DTA’s work to preserve up to 90 transfer credits and protect students from losing technical credits and/or having to retake transferred courses at the new institution. The credits are identified in approved course plans called Major Related Programs (MRP) pathways and consist primarily of general education credits for the major and some elective credits (WSAC, 2013c, p. 3). These MRPs are developed to help “students in some majors who must carefully select their elective and general education courses to ensure they will be eligible to apply for the major after applying to a baccalaureate institution” (WSAC, 2013c, p.12). The WSAC is currently revising the MRP list by eliminating programs with low to no enrollment and to expand MRPs to include an additional Nursing pathway. Other MRP pathways are being streamlined to improve access, such as the Business DTA/MRP requirements being streamlined. A working group developed a common course numbering system in addition defining common course outcomes.

The WSAC and SBCTC websites were updated for increased policy transparency to include more information to potential transfer students; increasing awareness of state transfer policies is one “long-term agenda regarding transfer” identified by the HECB in 2011 (HECB 2011b, p.1). Washington State has set up student centric policies as stated above; student access to information and resolutions when hardships arise navigating the transfer landscape are priorities. A State Transfer Liaison has been established on the WSAC staff; in 2011 and 2012, 16 and 17 calls to the liaison were made respectively regarding transfer issues with the majority being resolved (WSAC, 2013c, p. 9).

Higher Education System Enrollment Capacity

Washington State has generally experienced, and expects to continue to experience an expansion in higher education enrollment. The ambitious goal in the 10-year plan, discussed above, of 70% of Washington residents holding a higher education credential requires an additional expansion in enrollment on top of initial projections. To determine if the institutions of higher education can meet the demands of the 10 year plan, the state performed an assessment based upon several metrics which will be discussed below. This section will focus on how the 10 year plan's enrollment expectations compare to the next higher education system's resources in the next decade in the form of capital budget made available by the state's Office of Financial Management (OFM), compares to the surveyed self-assessed needs of institutions based upon their own projected enrollments vs. maximum enrollment capacity, and common capacity metrics based upon the actual physical size in square feet of the various institutions. It is highly important that institutions can physically and fiscally meet the demands of the ten year plan's higher enrollment levels. Any shortfall must be addressed through budgeting and planning at the institutional level and state level. The enrollment studies are discussed below.

Upgrading and expanding the higher education system is an ongoing task. In the 1990's Washington State focused upon building new state college campuses followed by upgrades of older campuses in the 2000's (WSAC, 2012, p.1). In 2008 the state surveyed its 4-yr institutions to determine the degree and enrollment projections from 2008-2009 out to 2018-2019; at the same time the SBCTC surveyed community colleges for their enrollment projections (HECB, 2008c, p.5). The survey focused on "three degree categories identified in the HECB Statewide Master Plan, e.g. mid-level degrees, bachelor's degrees, and graduate/professional degrees" (HECB, 2008c, p.5). The survey provides a means to compare state-wide institutional "bottom-

up” expectations expressed in the survey with the state boards’ “top-down” expectations for enrollment expressed in the then HECB Master Plan and the now current WSAC Ten Year Plan.

The state’s enrollment capacity study examines maximum enrollment capacity vs. the enrollment projection in 2018-2019 as supplied by the institutions and as compared to the projections of the state’s OFM. The surveys asked the institutions what they believed their maximum enrollment capacities and projected enrollments were in 10 years given their projected capital budgets, current campus infrastructure and expected enrollment trends. The state’s budget for higher education institution capital costs such as maintenance of existing buildings and expansion through new buildings over the next ten years was assessed. As a sanity check of the OFM and institutions projections, the state calculated capacity based upon campus teaching space per student metrics used in other studies to measure capacity. Those numbers are not included here explicitly, but are consistent with the OFM and institution projections.

The higher education institutional survey of institutions finds projected increases in enrollments and awarded degree to increase by 46,898 FTEs and 21,662 respectively while the OFM projects an enrollment increase of 18,426 FTEs statewide. Maximum enrollment capacity estimates by institutions are higher than their ten year enrollment projections; however they still fall well below the 61,500 FTE increase of the HECB Master Plan (HECB, 2008c, p.i). The 2013 Ten Year Plan does not give a specific FTE increase; rather it looks to monitor enrollments and degrees awarded over time as a measure of success (WSAC, 2013a, p.2).

Capital budget requests and spending were also examined to which four year public institutions were spending 31-36% of their capital budgets on growth from 2009-2017 while community colleges were spending an average of 27% during the same time frame (HECB 2008c, p.30-31). The study clearly shows that additional expansion in capacity is needed to meet the demands of Washington State as expressed in the previous HECB Master Plan and the WASC Roadmap. The study further concludes that the state’s goals can be “supported within the

projects identified within the institutions ten-year capital plans” (HECB 2008c, p.34). The WSAC in concert with the Joint Higher Education Committee in the legislature must adequately fund these capital project budgets in order to meet the enrollment and degree needs of Washington State.

Washington State’s Demographic Based Mobility

Throughout the all of the references discussed in this chapter there are discussions highlighting the state’s demographic changes and the economic mobility that can be extended to students. Community and Technical College transfers “represent a larger share of Latino/Hispanic, Native American, and African American graduates than of graduates in general” (SBCTC, 2003, p.5). Even with the expansion in enrollment it is found that “Hispanic/Latino students will increase the most [in K-12], but are less likely to go onto college” (HECB 2009a, p. 16). Other demographic studies find that all low income youth and minorities are under-represented in postsecondary education (HECB, 2008c, p.2). The state-wide graduating class of 2008 was comprised of 75.4% white students; it is projected in 2018 that 63.8% of the high school graduating class will be white (HECB, 2008c, p.5). The report highlights this “combination of declining educational attainment and growth in the numbers of under represented groups spells impending crisis for Washington” (HECB, 2008c, p.5).

Chapter 2 highlighted the importance of transfers in increasing degree attainment among minorities; therefore it is not surprising that Washington State studies also highlight transfers as key to increasing mobility (HECB, 2008c, p.8, 9). Of the student minority student populations that transfer, Native Americans, Hispanics and African American students each were more likely to transfer more than 40 credits, 58%, 58% and 54% respectively (SESRC, 2009, p.15). Another Washington State study found that upon completion of an associate’s degree “transfer rates are

nearly identical for all race and ethnic groups” (SBCTC, 2010, p.3). The same study finds that “goal clarity is important for transfer,” that students who had post degree plans were more likely to transfer. Prior to degree attainment Native Americans had the lowest transfer rate of 42% followed by Hispanic, White, Asian/Pacific Islander and African American students with 49, 51, 54 and 56% transfer rates respectively (SBCTC, 2010, p.10). The study suggests increased advising services for minorities as a way to deliver important information about transferring and costs of college.

Increased transparency in transfer policy is one of the goals of the Ten Year Plan; the needs of minority groups are in alignment with the needs of the broader student population. Efforts to increase transfer rates by making the process easier, working with students to develop their goals, and expanding access will all help benefit minority students achieve higher levels of degree completion.

Chapter 4

Recommendations for Washington State

Washington State has responded to the higher educational needs of its citizens and businesses by implementing student centered policies based upon higher education studies and recommended best practices. These state mandated changes are setting a solid foundation for meaningful change, however at these early stages of implementation through the newly formed Washington State Student Achievement Council (WSAC) several key recommendations are made here. These recommendations focus on strengthening the existing framework developed by the state in ways that are student focused and cover areas for increased transparency and clarity in state policies and data collection, further strengthening the student pipeline K-12 to higher education institutions, strengthening the bottom-up direction of collaboration and change, and last but perhaps most important is the state's implementation of meaningful action based upon student success and higher education faculty and staff feedback.

Statewide Data Collection

Washington State currently collects a wide variety of student data through its state-wide coordinating boards and then gathered by the state's Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) which is a part of the Office for Financial Management (OFM). Further improvement is needed to align the data with the Ten Year Plans goals. The data required for the 10 year plan goes well beyond enrollment statistics. The state's plan is centered on students achieving educational goals within a preschool to workforce system. Tracking the success of the plan will require detailed student data as they move through the system such as credits taken, enrollment status of full-time or part-time, educational intention, demographic data, time to graduation,

dropout rate and reentry rate, and all other pertinent data deemed necessary by higher educational experts and researchers to measure the true health of the system and its students. This pertinent data should be identified through working groups involving higher educational experts and researchers identified in literature and amongst their peers; this is not a stretch given the states use of working groups consisting of 2-yr and 4-yr faculty to improve transfers and improve curriculum across institutions. To track students at a minimum each student should have the same identification number in any institution of learning within the state from their first enrollment within the state starting with pre-kindergarten. The ERDC should not only track these students and their data but make it available as other states such as Ohio has done for large groups of students ages 17-20 over 8 years as discussed in Chapter 2.

A serious shortcoming of data sharing was seen with the enrollment capacity figures presented in Chapter 3. The projections made by the higher education institutions in the state were not in line with the OFM's projections. This significant misalignment in budgeting needs to be addressed in a timely manner by the legislature. Due to the long lead time in procuring funding for an enrollment capacity study, performing the study and making the data available, the state should focus on collecting this data on a yearly basis.

Not only should the data be collected on a yearly basis, but it should be presented together in the ERDC Yearly Compendium as it was in the 2008 enrollment capacity study to increase transparency and reduce the need for readers to piece the data together themselves from multiple sources. This is especially important in the legislative environment where data must be presented clearly and consistently to legislatures to affect action.

The ERDC is charged with coordinating data collected in the P-20W (Pre-K through Grade 20: postsecondary/workforce) system. The graduation rate data presented in the ERDC Yearly Compendium (ERDC, 2013) lacks a clear connection between students and their subsequent educational choices; the data exists in the system to follow students such as

calculating the percentage of high school graduates who complete a degree or certificate within 10 years of graduating. The reader is left to guess or manipulate data themselves.

The 10 Year Plan aims for 70% of Washingtonians earning a higher educational credential but clearly presented statistics are missing. The ERDC needs to present data that is anchored to the student population entering high school; then not only give the percentage that drop out in high school, but what percentage of the 9th grade population drops out and then earns a GED or high school diploma within 10 years. What percentage of the 9th grade population graduates and enters college, what percentage of 9th graders graduate a higher education institution in 4 and 5 years with a bachelor's? What percentage of the 9th grade population earns a credential in 10 years; this figure would include persons such as me whom entered military service or the workforce only to return to higher education later when ready. These clear statistics based upon a common base population and many other similar statistics are vital to measuring the success of the Ten Year Plan.

Policy Transparency and Availability

The WSAC through legislative backing needs to form a working group to identify key data to be presented in a clear and uniform manner in all institutional transfer guides, state transfer policies and higher education guides to facilitate transparent comparisons of options and institutions. Chapter 2 and 3 briefly touched upon the financial concerns of low income students which affect their transfer rates. Lack of transparent information on costs and avenues to a higher education credential disproportionately affect low income students due to their aversion to debt and lack of parental experience navigating the higher education system. Most importantly this data must be presented simply and should show what the lowest out of pocket costs are for low income students and what the median out of pocket costs are for the median student while clearly

explaining that every student is unique. We must keep in mind the student who is living at or below the poverty line, with no money saved for college, yet has a dream to continue their education beyond high school. This high need student should be able to look at a simple table and see that highest need student entering this institution can get a free ride if it's possible. Likewise the median student aid should be presented as well. If 4-yr and 2-yr college guides available at bookstores can clearly list the low, average, and high SAT/ACT scores of admitted students, then surely each institution can clearly list their costs. Contact information for the office of student aid should be listed along with a link to more detailed information and a wider variety of examples.

To increase transparency and ease of use, this data should be presented in a common format by all institutions in the state. Therefore a potential student should be able to access a simple table or figure in each transfer and/or admissions guide which clearly explains the cost of attendance, availability of aid, and avenues for future success through other follow on programs. This data is available but not typically concentrated in an easy to digest presentation that is uniform state-wide.

Table 4-1. Sample Data for Institutional Brochures

Students Program Option	Cost (Low \$)	Debt (Low \$)	Time to Associates (Summers)	Post Program Options
Running Start	\$XX (\$YY)	\$XX (\$YY)	X Years (Y Years)	DTA, MRP
Graduating High School	\$XX (\$YY)	\$XX (\$YY)	X Years (Y Years)	DTA, MRP
Adult Student	\$XX (\$YY)	\$XX (\$YY)	X Years (Y Years)	DTA, MRP

As an example a community college informational brochure and the more specific transfer guide would list the options for entering the community college and the common pathways taken by students post enrollment as shown above. This table would be found in the

same location in every institutions transfer or college brochure for easy institutional comparison. A student should be able to link these tables together such that a high school student (and/or their parents) in the 10th grade can look at the running start guide provided by the high school and pick up a community college guide or a 4-yr guide and quickly and easily see the benefits/implications of each program and optional student pathway via program combinations. Average costs for low income students' needs to be provided so the standard sticker price before aid does not scare them away from choosing higher education. A description of each option should be given below the table for further information. The availability of easy to follow condensed options is important to removing barriers to transfer because it removes a large portion of uncertainty in the college selection process.

The legislation piece is of greatest importance; it will provide the motivating factor in bringing institutions together in working groups to identify what condensed data should be presented and in a manner that is easiest to digest. A law mandating this information be placed in every transfer guide and college brochure in the same up-front location is necessary to ensure conformity and compliance across the state. The table should easily fit on one page and the supporting paragraphs should briefly describe the option, provide direction to more detailed information and not take more than an additional page. Limiting this data to a few pages makes it easier to digest and lessens the impact to the pre-existing guides/materials.

Strengthening the Student Pipeline

The publishing of data and streamlining of information available to students will remove barriers for qualified students. The proportion of qualified students must be increased. One requirement of the Running Start program is GPA, therefore program requirements need to be explained to students and parents prior to program enrollment in the 10th grade for their 11th grade

course work. The state has set up a great foundation bringing various interests working together, now it must continue the push forward and clearly show students the relevancy of their education to their future goals, careers and lives.

Clarity of goals was vital to increasing students transfer success as discussed in Chapter 3. Likewise the P-20W system needs to provide 9th and 10th graders clear information on their pathways to a career whether it is blue or white collar so they can develop broad long term goals. The student whom aspires to become an auto mechanic should have their learning options in high school and technical school clearly explained. The state's department of labor should work in concert with businesses to identify what qualifications are needed for current/future positions. The state's 10 Year Plan focuses on meeting the employment demands of the state making clear pathways to a good paying in demand career a necessity.

The various pathways for students should lead to P-12 educators tailoring expectations to these students. A student pursuing a technical degree should have math and science curriculum that meets their needs. Returning to our auto mechanic, science and math curricula that focus on skills needed to work on today's technology rich vehicles is a must. Math classes covering word problems, for example, should relate to technical day to day math skills lacking in today's employment applicants. The underlying math of addition and multiplication would be the same but the context would be relevant to the student to foster stronger buy-in to their goals.

Increase Faculty Collaboration to Strengthen Agreements

The articulation agreements discussed in Chapter 2 highlighted the work performed by the dedicated faculty and staffs of each institution. Those that have been involved in state sponsored working groups have worked very hard to increase student transfer rates and to improve curriculum at the both the 2-yr and 4-yr levels. The state's top down approach has

identified the need to increase student success, not just statistics for an annual publication, which should and has resulted in easy buy in from the faculty and staff constituents across the state. There is a genuine desire to improve the system from the bottom up which is seen in the numbers of faculty and staff that volunteer their time for unfunded working groups. The state's role should continue to focus on facilitating working groups of faculty and staff to determine the best path forward, identify minimum requirements to be met by institutions, and then implement a plan for implementation of those broad requirements with the appropriate funding to do so. The state has sent a message from the top of the higher educational system down to the faculty and staffs that the system is not working as intended for the students, citizens, and economy. This message is more than a set of top down demands but more of a rallying cry that effort and input are needed by faculty and staff directly in working groups and in the comment periods when working group findings are sent out to the faculty and staffs statewide. The state's efforts are student focused which is important because it enables more buy in from faculty and staff; the goals are clear and align with faculty and staff who are invested in their students success.

For example the state legislature has mandated a student focused approach to increase the transfer rate but also to maintain the quality of transfer student's education. The use of Major Related Programs (MRP) that identify class requirements for 2-yr students for transfer to 4-yr institutions is an example of a broad mandate that maintains some autonomy of faculty. MRPs are developed by representative faculty from 2-yr and 4-yr institutions. Working together they align the 2-yr course curriculum, as described in Chapter 2's articulation agreements, by making course content and course numbering identical in 2-yr and 4-yr courses. The working groups in the past have identified a lack of working group funding as a barrier to completing their work.

Meaningful State Legislature Follow up

The WSAC needs to link student data directly to the intent of the 10 Year Plan. Student data presented in the various sources used in this paper tend to daisy-chain student populations in a disjoint manner as discussed above in data collection recommendations. The WSAC armed with clear student progress data as it relates to the 10-year plan must effect change through the Joint Higher Education Committee in the state legislature. Likewise the JHEC must appropriate funds and enact legislation in a timely manner to address the needs of the state's students and economy.

The predecessor to the WSAC, the HECB was criticized for not having the power to effect change which led to the formation of the WSAC as discussed in Chapter 2; the WSAC and legislature need to be responsive to state's higher education system's faculty and staff recommendation made through the various working groups in order to maintain legitimacy. For example any barriers to the 10 Year Plan identified by these working groups must result in legislation that leads to timely barrier removal.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Washington State is in a unique position of having identified its citizens' participation in higher education as being "among the lowest in the nation" (E2SHB 2483.SL, p.3), linked the issue to state economic growth and citizen quality of life, and also taken significant steps to address the higher education needs of the people and businesses in the state. The state has further recognized the barriers to effective change in the areas of articulation agreements and more broadly barriers to change within the statewide higher education system.

The state has implemented coordinating boards over the years to address issues in higher education. As inefficiencies and short comings have been identified, consolidations and strengthening of these agencies has occurred. The WSAC now has a direct link to the state legislature through the Joint Higher Education Committee (JHEC). Coordinating boards for K-12 education, the community colleges, independent colleges and private colleges are all mandated to work with the WSAC to implement the student centered Ten Year Plan.

This top down directive mandating a student centered approach is extremely important in effecting meaningful change. A multifaceted student centered approach that examines numerous ways to improve the graduation rates of students through working groups of faculty and staff sends a message to faculty and staff that the state is genuinely interested their opinions. This top down approach helps bottom up efforts cut through bureaucratic red tape by providing avenues to implement much needed change. The interest exists at the bottom to make improvements as seen in the reports discussed in Chapter 3 and the examples of developing articulation agreements in Chapter 2. The state must follow through on these working groups with meaningful action if

ideas and progress are to be made. This means the opinions and work performed at the lower levels must be incorporated in statewide changes and that follow up working groups that report on progress are required.

The foundation for change and improvement to student outcomes through increased transfer access described in Chapter 3 can implement change that is consistent with best practices described in Chapter 2. Most importantly the 10 Year Plan is student focused; as discussed above, this gives incredibly strong direction to any working group developing policy and to those implementing policy that the student's outcome comes first. Washington faces a tough road ahead in its journey to improve. If the state implements policies based upon working group recommendations and then follow up with policy improvements based upon student data, then the changes will truly be student centric and will affect meaningful improvements.

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About the Author

David V. Colameco

David was born near Bogota, Colombia on November 26, 1979 and was adopted by two loving parents who brought him to the United States in early 1980. He served in the U.S. Navy for six years from 1999 to 2005 and left an Interior Communications Electrician First Class. In January of 2005 he started full time classes as an undergraduate at The Pennsylvania State University, graduating with a B.S. in Nuclear Engineering and a B.S. in Economics in 2008, and in 2010 an M.S. in Nuclear Engineering. David earned his Ph.D. in Nuclear Engineering from the Pennsylvania State University in December of 2012.