

Seamless Student Transfer

The state's public four- and two-year institutions have a long history of continually enhancing the ease with which students can transfer credit-bearing courses among and between institutions. The Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (MACRAO) Transfer Agreement started in 1972 and was succeeded by the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) in 2014 to provide students with 30 credits in general education in approved disciplines—equivalent to a full year of college—transferable among all public universities and community colleges statewide. Dozens of laddered two- and four-year degree programs among the state's community colleges and public universities further serve the needs of students and employers. The state's public universities, community colleges, and independent non-profit colleges are voluntarily partnering via a statewide Transfer Steering Committee (TSC). The TSC has provided coordination of a degree pathways initiative, which has led to the replacement of institution-to-institution articulation agreements in 10 high-enrollment majors with articulated statewide degree pathways spanning across all participating campuses. More information is available on the Michigan Transfer Network website (mitransfer.org), which provides students and academic advisors with even more information about transferring, including easy identification of course-to-course transfer credit equivalencies.

Ongoing efforts to further enhance seamless student transfer among Michigan's public universities and community colleges should be done on a voluntary basis and in a collaborative manner. The state's student transfer process should respect institutional departmental discretion in determining the alignment and rigor associated with courses completed at other postsecondary education providers. Final determination of the transferability of discipline-specific courses to the state's public universities must remain the responsibility of university departmental faculty who are best positioned to ascertain the credit worthiness of courses completed at other institutions.

Additionally, new energy is flowing into the activity of reverse transfer, whereby students who transfer from a community college to a four-year institution can transfer those latter credits back to the community college and subsequently receive an associate degree. The receipt of an associate degree through reverse transfer generates a win-win-win outcome. First and foremost, it allows the student to receive the associate degree they have earned, ensuring they have the credential while enroute to their intended eventual receipt of a bachelor's degree. Second, it allows community colleges to have an associate degree completion recorded in their outcomes, recognizing their role in the student's educational journey. And finally, it allows a student to enroll at a public university when they are ready to transfer. This may help students enter their desired academic program earlier, keeping regimented or sequential programs open to them..

Policy Actions:

- Support voluntary efforts to refine a streamlined, simplified and transparent process by which students can determine the transferability of credit-bearing courses from and among the state's community colleges and its public universities.
- Promote recognition that—with an emphasis on two- and four-year degree program alignment and the maintenance of rigorous academic standards—final determination of discipline-specific credit acceptance lies with university departmental faculty.
- Encourage greater awareness and utilization of reverse transfer initiatives among transfer students at the public universities to help students retroactively receive a community college-granted associate degree and for community colleges to receive recognition for their contribution to a student's education.