



PROGRESS REPORT ON CREDIT TRANSFER

March 2004

Improving opportunities for technical college students seeking to transfer credit to University of Wisconsin (UW) System institutions is a long-standing priority of the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). Since 1989, the WTCS has worked with the leadership of the UW System to align curriculum, increase the rigor of technical college offerings, improve advising services for WTCS and UW System students, and adopt policies that promote increased options for WTCS students transfer to UW System institutions. Beginning in 1989, the Board of Regents has periodically adopted changes in UW System transfer policies that have expanded the number of and kinds of technical college credits UW System institutions could accept. As a result, the number of former WTCS students successfully transferring credits to UW System institutions have expanded from 1,553 in 1991-92 to 3,206 in 2002-03.

Over the last year, the leadership of the WTCS and the UW System continued to work together to address credit transfer issues and further expand transfer opportunities for WTCS students. This collaboration led to the development of a Joint UWS/WTCS Plan for Enhancing Credit Transfer and Expanding the Number of Baccalaureate Degree Holders in Wisconsin. After extensive discussions by both governing boards, the WTCS Board and the UW System Board of Regents adopted this six-part plan (See Table 1).

Both the WTCS and the UW System have already begun implementing the provisions of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan and expect many of the changes to be in place by Fall 2004. Presidents Carpenter and Lyall have met jointly with staff to affirm and begin implementation of strategies to address the six parts of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan. In addition to an inter-system working group, both the WTCS and UW System have appointed systemwide advisory committees to guide the implementation steps and ensure broad-based support and involvement among faculty, staff, and administrative leaders.

The Joint UWS/WTCS Plan addresses many of the concerns raised by the Speaker's Task Force in both the course of its deliberations and in the seven Task Force recommendations related to credit transfer. The Joint UWS/WTCS Plan also addresses some additional issues that leaders of the two systems believe will enhance credit transfer for WTCS students. The WTCS is pleased to report on the following progress being made with respect to credit transfer from the WTCS to the UW System.

Transfer of Occupational/Technical Courses. Part I of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan concerns the transfer of occupational/technical courses from WTCS associate degree career and technical programs. In adopting Part I, the UW System Board of Regents committed itself to adopting a new transfer policy that would permit UW System institutions to evaluate WTCS occupational and technical courses for the awarding of transfer credit on the same basis as similar occupational and technical courses offered at any other regionally or nationally accredited institution. This marks a significant change in UW System transfer policy that has been in place (cont.)

Table 1

UWS/WTCS Plan for Enhancing Credit Transfer and Expanding the Number of Baccalaureate Degree Holders in Wisconsin

Fall 2003

Part I: Transfer of Occupational/Technical Courses

A new policy will be established that will enable UW institutions to transfer WTCS occupational/technical courses on a course-by-course basis. These courses will be reviewed by UW faculty at each UW System institution, and will transfer if they are found to be comparable or equivalent to UW courses at each institution. These courses will be officially posted on the Transfer Information System (TIS).

Part II: Transfer of WTCS General Education Core Courses

Subject to review and approval by the faculties at each UW System institution, a list of WTCS general education core courses will be established that will transfer and apply to UW institutions. WTCS students in applied associate degree programs will be able to transfer up to 30 credits from these courses, and apply them toward general education and/or other degree requirements at UW institutions. The manner in which they apply will depend upon the student's major and the general education and program requirements of the particular UW institution.

Part III: Degree Completion Program Agreements

The two Systems will continue to develop "2+2" degree completion programs where WTCS students will be able to transfer additional courses toward a UW four-year degree. WTCS students selecting these programs will receive a written program agreement that will specify the courses that will transfer, how they will apply, and what additional requirements will be needed for graduation.

Part IV: Credit Transfer Contract

WTCS students will be able to check and confirm how their courses will transfer towards a UW degree by referencing the Transfer Information System (TIS). The TIS printed report will serve as a written credit transfer contract for students who successfully complete the courses.

Part V: Transfer of WTCS Liberal Arts Degree Graduates

Students who graduate from WTCS liberal arts (college parallel) programs at MATC-Madison, MATC-Milwaukee and Nicolet with an associate of arts or sciences degree specifically aligned with the UW associate degree will be able to transfer up to 72 credits and have their university-wide general education requirements satisfied at any UW institution, subject to review and approval by the faculties at each UW System institution.

Part VI: Expansion of Baccalaureate Degree Holders in Wisconsin

A broad-based committee will be created to explore additional options for expanding the number of baccalaureate degree holders in Wisconsin in collaborative and cost-effective ways.

since 1989 that discouraged UW System institutions from offering credit for WTCS occupational/technical courses outside a specific articulation agreement covering multiple courses. Implementation of this part of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan is driven by student demand. Priority implementation is being target based on current articulation agreements and institutions having the highest level of transfer activity. As courses are approved for transfer, the information will be documented on the computerized Transfer Information System (TIS). Initial posting to TIS will be completed by Fall 2004.

General Education. Part II of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan directly addresses the first credit transfer recommendation of the Speaker's Taskforce concerning the number of credits of general studies that would automatically transfer between WTCS and UW System institutions. For the last three years, WTCS policy has required the state's technical colleges to accept all general studies credits transferred from the UW System to the WTCS subject only to the requirement that the credits be relevant to the student's educational program in the technical college.

Speaker's Task Force Recommendation

Require by statute that up to 25 credits of general education courses shall automatically transfer between WTCS and UW System institutions.

Implementation of Part II of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan goes beyond the 25 credit target set by the Speaker's Task Force to expand to 30 credits the amount of general studies course work that the UW System institutions will accept from technical colleges. WTCS leaders have identified this as a high priority area for implementation. Fifteen WTCS faculty groups have convened to review and/or establish statewide curriculum for general studies courses. This effort includes ninety-six faculty members and forty deans and support staff. Courses are being posted to a web site for review by UW System faculty. The first series of courses will be posted by mid-March, 2004. Another block of course which constitutes the core general studies courses for an associate degree of applied arts or sciences is scheduled for posting by the end of March. By Fall 2004, faculty assessment will be completed and courses approved by the UW System for transfer will be included in the computerized Transfer Information System (TIS). The information included in TIS will permit students to identify not only which course work will transfer, but also how that course work will apply towards completion of any specific major at a UW System institution.

Degree Completion Program Agreements.

Part III of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan commits the WTCS and the UW System to continue to develop 2+2 degree completion programs. In traditional undergraduate programs in the UW System, students typically spend much of the first two years completing academic foundation courses. Then, in the second two years of a four-year program, traditional undergraduates take specialized courses in a major field. In contrast, technical college associate degree students complete between 36 and 47 credits in specialized courses in career and technical fields and between 21 and 30 credits of general studies courses in the two years of study leading to an applied associate degree. Degree

Speaker's Task Force Recommendation

Require that the UW System and WTCS continue and accelerate the negotiation of articulation agreements. Require establishment of an articulation agreement for each program that exists in both systems. Utilize the Joint Administrative Committee on Academic Programs (JACAP) to identify which programs exist in both systems. Agreements should be developed at the department level institutions.

completion programs recognize the specialized skills and knowledge that graduates of applied associate degree programs have already acquired and provide higher level courses in the major field and additional academic foundation courses to round out the student's baccalaureate education. For more than ten years, the technical colleges have had degree completion programs in a variety of majors in place with several independent colleges and universities including Marquette University, Viterbo University, and Lakeland College. In addition, the WTCS and the UW System have been collaborating for several years to develop degree completion programs that will dramatically increase the number of credits the UW System will grant to graduates of WTCS associate degree career and technical programs and speed the completion of the baccalaureate degree.

Articulation Agreements. Closely related to degree completion programs are articulation agreements covering specific program-to-program transfer between the WTCS and the UW System institutions. The WTCS and the UW System have in place nearly 400 individual articulation agreements matching course work completed at a specific WTCS program at a specific technical college to a related major at a specific UW System institution. A more recent development has been the implementation of statewide agreements for Nursing, Early Childhood Education, and Industrial Management.

The presidents of the WTCS and the UW System appoint the membership of JACAP from among the academic leadership of the state's two public postsecondary systems. Over the last two years, the presidents of the two systems have made improving transfer opportunities a priority. As a result, Dr. Lyall and Dr. Carpenter have chosen to work together with their senior academic staff to identify opportunities for program alignment and articulation between the systems. The role they have assigned to JACAP has been one of overseeing implementation of the policy decisions adopted by the two governing boards. As a result, JACAP is responsible for overseeing the coordination of academic programs offered by the UW System and WTCS as well as several projects to support the implementation of expanded opportunities for credit transfer for WTCS students.

A longstanding JACAP project involves the monitoring and reporting on the flows of students who transfer credits from the WTCS to the UW System or from the UW System to the WTCS. JACAP staff present these reports to the WTCS Board and the UW System Board of Regents annually as the data is available. In addition, as part of the previous efforts to improve articulation and credit transfer agreements, a separate JACAP project explores more broadly the flow of students moving between the two postsecondary systems, regardless of the actual transfer of credit. Finally, for more than ten years, JACAP has overseen the development of the Transfer Information System (TIS). TIS provides students in the WTCS and the UW System with on-line access to information about the transfer of credit within and between the two postsecondary systems.

Presidents Carpenter and Lyall convened a JACAP Review Group to develop recommendations with for the future role and structure of JACAP. The Review Group endorsed continuation of a state-level and regional groups to provide leadership for system-to-system articulation and collaboration, but recommended reconstituting the structure and membership of the groups. The Presidents of each system accepted the Review Group recommendations at a joint meeting in February, 2004. Restructuring of JACAP will begin in Fall 2004.

The Speaker's Task Force recommended that the WTCS and the UW System continue and accelerate the negotiation of articulation agreements. Some of the additional statewide agreements under development include Fire Science, Criminal Justice, Business, and Instructional Assistant (needed by classroom support staff under federal No Child Left Behind legislation). Negotiations between the leadership of the UW System and the WTCS have prioritized these program areas in response to the needs of the state's public and private sector employers and the demand for specific articulation agreements expressed by WTCS students. Restructuring of JACAP regional councils will more effectively facilitate develop of transfer programs that are based on regional need and student interest.

Speaker's Task Force Recommendation

Prioritize the programs for which articulation agreements will be developed based on "student flow" and economic development needs.

To assure the subsequent academic success of transferring students, the development of individual or statewide articulation agreements requires the active participation and collaboration by faculty and academic leaders from UW System institutions and the technical colleges. Our current experience is that this process takes about a year to complete for each curriculum area under consideration. Timetables that have been established by UW System and WTCS leaders for general studies and programs leading to degrees in specific majors are based on this experience.

Speaker's Task Force Recommendation

Establish a timeline for the development of articulation agreements.

Finally, the goal of articulation agreements is to avoid requiring students to repeat or demonstrate that they have mastered the content and competencies associated with a particular course work. When appropriate, however, "test out" options may be included in articulation agreements at the discretion of the UW System institutions and their faculty. The WTCS Board Policy on Credit for Prior Learning includes a provision requiring technical colleges to permit any student to attempt to test out of a course for which the students wishes to seek credit based on prior coursework or life experience. Establishment and implementation of such a policy for WTCS transfers to UW System institutions would be a responsibility of the UW System Board of Regents

Speaker's Task Force Recommendation

In articulation agreements, include the option for students to "test out" of courses.

Credit Transfer Contract. Part IV of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan commits the two systems to the develop a written contract that will specify the transferability of WTCS course work and how it will be applied to specific UW System majors at each UW System institution. This transfer contract will include information about transferability of occupational/technical courses, general studies courses, additional requirements for degree completion programs and other kinds of program-to-program articulation agreements. Leadership from the two systems has created a joint WTCS/UWS work group to develop model templates to be used to for program agreements. The templates will be used to document courses completed at a technical colleges, courses that will transfer and how they will apply to a UW System major, as well as specific UW courses a student must complete to earn a baccalaureate degree in the desired field of study. By Fall 2004, faculty

assessment will be completed and courses approved by the UW System for transfer will be included in the computerized Transfer Information System.

Transfer of WTCS Liberal Arts Degree Graduates.

Part V of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan commits the UW System to accept for graduates of the liberal arts programs at MATC-Madison, MATC-Milwaukee and Nicolet up to 72 credits and have their university-wide general education requirements satisfied at any UW institution, subject to review and approval by the faculties at each UW System institution. To ensure that these students receive full credit for their WTCS course work, they must complete a course of study in arts or sciences specifically aligned with the requirements of UW associate degree.

WTCS leadership has convened a WTCS work group to assess and make recommendations necessary for alignment of WTCS course work with UW associate degree requirements. In addition, meetings are being convened between the three technical colleges offering associate degrees in liberal studies and the three UW comprehensive institutions having the highest number of WTCS liberal studies transfer students (UW-Milwaukee, UW-Stevens Point, and UW-Madison). By first seeking close alignment of course requirements between the sending and receiving institutions, the efforts of the two systems should provide direct benefits to the greatest number of transfer students most quickly. At the same time, these efforts will then provide model agreements for use with other UW System institutions. The initial work of the work group will be completed by July 2004. By Fall 2004 courses approved by the UW System for transfer will be included in the computerized Transfer Information System.

Expansion of Baccalaureate Degree Holders in Wisconsin.

Part VI of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan addresses the state's need to increase the number of adults in Wisconsin who have completed a baccalaureate degree. To this end, the UW System and the WTCS will create a broad-based committee to explore additional options for expanding the number of baccalaureate degree holders in Wisconsin. One goal of this committee is to build on the existing efforts to enhance transfer opportunities to explore collaborative and cost-effective ways to increase access to higher education for adult learners who may have already entered the work force. At this time, the Presidents of both the WTCS and UW Systems and the respective governing boards have agreed on the size, structure and mission of a committee to explore options for expanding the number of baccalaureate degree holders. The committee is scheduled to begin its work in March 2004.

Uniform Curriculum. A key factor in making all of these transfer opportunities a reality for WTCS students is the development of a uniform curriculum within the WTCS. The desire to increase the transferability of technical college credits to UW System institutions is only one factor driving standardization of WTCS curriculum. WTCS students and employers have come to expect that the courses and programs offered in one part of the state will provide similar competencies to those offered in other parts of the state. The rapid growth of on-line learning opportunities through the WTCS internet-based eTech Colleges of Wisconsin has also contributed to the standardization of courses and programs. Finally, to support credit transfer opportunities, the WTCS Board is proactively committed to standardizing the curriculum in high

Speaker's Task Force Recommendation

Require the UW System and WTCS to accelerate the development of their own systemwide uniform curricula.

demand/high transfer interest programs. Specific steps that the WTCS Board has taken to develop uniform curricula include:

- Require, as a condition of program approval, that technical college districts seeking permission to offer programs already offered by other districts adopt the existing curriculum;
- Target, through Incentive Grant funds administered by System Office staff, funding for new and emerging occupations, programs in high demand, and apprenticeship training to support statewide curriculum development projects;
- Require, as a condition of funding, that statewide curriculum projects be developed using the Wisconsin Instructional Design System (WIDS). WIDS provides a consistent tool for formatting and sharing the curriculum across the WTCS.

The WTCS has recently been recognized as a national leader as a result of its efforts to standardize curriculum in high demand/high transfer areas such as nursing and early childhood education.

Appeals Process for Transfer Issues.

The final recommendation of the Speaker's Task Force concerned an appeals process for students. Instead of developing a formal appeals process, the leadership of the two systems has chosen to take a more proactive course of action. First, by documenting transfer agreements in the computerized Transfer Information System, the WTCS and the UW System will provide all students, faculty, and counselors with a single source to consult about what courses will transfer from technical colleges to UW System institutions and how course work completed at a technical college will apply towards the completion of any specific major at a UW System institution. An added benefit of compiling all WTCS/UW System transfer information in TIS will be the ease of updating future agreements and disseminating changes in transfer arrangements to students, faculty, and staff.

Speaker's Task Force Recommendation

Direct the UW System and WTCS to promulgate rules establishing a procedure to appeal a decision of the receiving institution denying credit for a course taken at the other institution. The rules shall provide that decisions made pursuant to the process are final, notwithstanding s. 36.09 (4), *Wis. Stats.*, the UWS faculty governance statute.

Second, both the WTCS and the UW System have appointed systemwide ombudspersons for the resolution for students of any remaining transfer issues between the WTCS and the UW System. These two individuals are responsible for resolving any appeals arising from the decision of a receiving institution to deny credit for a course taken in the WTCS or the UW System. Within the WTCS, Board policy requires technical colleges to accept credits earned at another technical college, a UW System institution, or at another regionally or nationally accredited postsecondary institution if the coursework is relevant to the student's current educational program at the technical college. This policy requires technical college districts to provide a district level appeals process for transferring students. In addition, the WTCS ombudsperson is responsible for resolving appeals at the systemwide level concerning transfers within the WTCS or from non-UW System institutions. The goal of these two efforts is to resolve disputes over credit transfer issues before they arise while providing a point of contact for students in each system to resolve issues that have not previously been anticipated in developing transfer agreements.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Competing successfully in the 21st century will require a workforce with stronger academic foundations, more and greater technical skills, and an appetite for lifelong learning. The occupational preparation programs offered by the WTCS will continue to provide important opportunities for young adults and working-age adults to gain the skills and knowledge needed to begin a career. As the needs of the workplace continue to evolve, career advancement opportunities for many technical college students will depend on the ease with which they can access additional formal education and training.

The WTCS and the UW System have worked together since 1989 to improve transfer opportunities for WTCS students. Through the adoption of the Joint UWS/WTCS Plan, the two systems have committed themselves to further enhancing credit transfer opportunities. In undertaking this effort, the leadership of the WTCS and the UW System have placed their priorities on developing solutions that are responsive to the demands of students, employers, and taxpayers, maximize UW System recognition of the skills and knowledge acquired through course work completed at a technical college, and promote seamless solutions to transfer while safeguarding the integrity of the educational experiences offered by the technical colleges and UW System institutions.

The Joint UWS/WTCS Plan has set Fall 2004 as an implementation date for many of the changes described above. While the magnitude of this undertaking is challenging, WTCS and UW leadership, faculty, and staff are working together to meet this deadline. However, the work of enhancing transfer opportunities for WTCS students will not end in Fall 2004, but is part of an ongoing process to promote seamless education and lifelong learning. The leadership of the WTCS looks forward to continuing to work with UW System leadership to develop new and innovative ways to meet the educational needs of the state. It is important to emphasize that while the WTCS can describe what it is doing to promote and improve credit transfer opportunities for WTCS students, implementation of many of the changes that will increase transferability are the responsibility of the UW System, its policymakers, and its faculty.