

# **Academic Credit for Prior Learning in Washington Postsecondary Education: Proposed Policies and Recommendations**

**Prepared by Noreen M. Light and William S. Moore  
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Substitute Senate Bill 6357, passed by the 2010 Legislature, directed the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to consult with a variety of specific stakeholder groups and “develop policies for awarding academic credit for learning from work and military experience, military and law enforcement training, career college training, internships and externships, and apprenticeships,” policies that should “provide for consistent application by all institutions of higher education and a basis for accurate and complete academic counseling.” The proposed policies and any related recommendations should be submitted to the appropriate legislative committees by December 31, 2010.

People gain a wealth of experience through both formal and informal learning experiences. There is no reason to re-learn skills and knowledge in the college classroom – and pay for the opportunity to do so – if there is a process in place to assess and award credit for this prior learning, *as it applies to the courses or programs for which the person would receive credit*. Assessing and awarding credit for prior learning allows students entering college with prior knowledge and skills to move further and faster toward their educational goals.

Awarding credit for prior learning also moves students further and faster toward their career goals. This is important because, even during the current recession, Washington has a large number of employers unable to find the skilled workers they need. This recession has also led more people to return to education to gain competitive career skills resulting in record enrollments. Increasing the award of credit for prior learning is one way to expedite completion of certificates and degrees – while serving more students - using existing resources as efficiently as possible.

Unfortunately, the availability of credit for prior learning, the process of prior learning assessment (PLA), and the process by which a student would apply for PLA credit are not readily visible and easily understood. Although robust policy guidance for institutions exists - provided by a wide range of entities - practices at individual institutions of higher education are inconsistent. In this report, revisions to existing policy are recommended, and - equally as important - revisions to practice are recommended for adoption by all 40 public institutions of higher education in Washington State.

### Guiding Principles

The proposed revisions are responsive to the pressures and issues noted above and reflect a review of prior learning policies across Washington State and the country. In addition, the proposed revisions are based on the following principles:

- Students should consistently be awarded the maximum amount of college-level credit for prior learning which meets the college’s standards, as appropriate for the student’s educational and career path.
- Colleges and universities should retain the responsibility for assessing prior learning.
- Practices used in assessing prior learning should be consistent with outcomes assessment methodology used in other areas at colleges and universities.

## **Challenges**

While it is difficult to determine how pervasive specific problems are, the work group has identified some overarching challenges, including:

- Transparency and communication
- Assessment: matching learning with course or program outcomes, assessors' level of training and time, lack of a systematic approach
- Coding and tracking of credit for prior learning
- Transferability of credits
- Specialized, professional accreditation standards

## **Recommendations**

The SSB6357 work group advocates for transparent policies and practices which increase the number of students being awarded academic credit for prior learning. The following recommendations are intended to increase transparency and consistency in PLA practices, including information dissemination, assessment of prior learning, award of credit, transcription of credit, and transfer of credit.

Establish an ongoing work group:

- To facilitate the implementation of the following revisions to policy and practice, and to improve consistency in PLA practices across the institutions of higher education, it is recommended that an ongoing statewide Prior Learning Assessment and Credit work group be established.

This work group would be charged with implementing, coordinating, and reviewing the following recommendations regarding revisions of policy and guidelines, improvement of institutional practice, and alignment of practice with policies:

- Increase transparency and consistency
- Improve clarity and consistency of fee structure
- Identify a single point of contact for PLA at each institution
- Increase the number of PLA credits accepted in 2-year and 4-year institutions
- Develop a matrix of work-based and other common training in career clusters and possible credits to be awarded
- Develop a handbook for training faculty and staff
- Provide online and recorded training for those who will be advising students or assessing individual student's prior learning, to include training on existing policies and exemplary practices
- Develop a consistent method of tracking the number of students seeking credit, the number of assessments attempted, and the number of prior learning credits awarded
- Track number of students attempting and completing PLA, and the number of PLA credits being awarded, annually
- Develop articulation agreements between institutions, where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified

## INTRODUCTION

People gain a wealth of experience through both formal and informal learning experiences. There is no reason to re-learn skills and knowledge in the college classroom – and pay for the opportunity to do so – if there is a process in place to assess and award credit for this prior learning, *as it applies to the courses or programs for which the person would receive credit*. Assessing and awarding credit for prior learning allows students entering college with prior knowledge and skills to move further and faster toward their educational goals.

Awarding credit for prior learning also moves students further and faster toward their career goals. This is important because, even during the current recession, Washington has a large number of employers unable to find the skilled workers they need. This recession has also led more people to return to education to gain competitive career skills resulting in record enrollments. Increasing the award of credit for prior learning is one way to expedite completion of certificates and degrees – while serving more students - using existing resources as efficiently as possible.

Unfortunately, the availability of credit for prior learning, the process of prior learning assessment (PLA), and the process by which a student would apply for PLA credit are not readily visible and easily understood. Although robust policy guidance for institutions exists - provided by a wide range of entities - practices at individual institutions of higher education are inconsistent. In this report, revisions to existing policy are recommended, and - equally as important - revisions to practice are recommended for adoption by all 40 public institutions of higher education in Washington State.

### Legislation

Substitute Senate Bill 6357, passed by the 2010 Legislature, found that “Washington institutions of higher education [need to] develop valued, reliable, and transparent policies regarding the academic recognition of prior significant life and learning experiences to be consistently applied at all Washington institutions of higher education.” The legislation directed the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to consult with a variety of specific stakeholder groups and “develop policies for awarding academic credit for learning from work and military experience, military and law enforcement training, career college training, internships and externships, and apprenticeships,” policies that should “provide for consistent application by all institutions of higher education and a basis for accurate and complete academic counseling.” The proposed policies and any related recommendations should be submitted to the appropriate legislative committees by December 31, 2010.<sup>1</sup>

### SSB 6357 PLA Work Group

SBCTC staff took the lead in organizing the work involved in responding to SSB 6357, assembling a PLA work group consisting of representatives from the key agencies and stakeholder groups defined in the legislation (see Appendix I for a list of participants). Between August and December 2010 the group met both face-to-face and using web tools to discuss existing policies and practices (including the guidelines approved in 2000 for the two-year college system—see Appendix II), identify key barriers to implementing existing policies, and propose revisions to current policies and practices, including the recommendations needed to pursue these revisions. Per the legislation, specific areas addressed include verification, accreditation, transfer of academic credit, licensing and professional recognition,

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6357>.

and financial aid, along with recommendations regarding ways to provide for consistent application with accurate and complete academic counseling across institutions of higher education.

The work group also developed and administered a survey to determine current PLA practices, mined institutions' websites to determine ease of access to PLA information, and contacted institutions to develop a list of PLA contacts.

## CONTEXT

Much work has been completed by other organizations and institutions. The intent of the SSB 6357 PLA work group is to build on the principles, policies and practices that have been developed and implemented in other educational systems, and within our own higher education system, to create a smoother process for assessing and awarding credit for prior learning.

### Global Perspective

A February 2010 report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a collaboration of 30 democratic countries, states:

...countries emphasise the development, use and recognition of tangible *backup* – in its most conventional form a document – for describing a person's knowledge, skills and competences. The many countries concerned highlight the need to identify and document non-formal and informal learning outcomes, primarily so that the corresponding knowledge, skills and competences become visible: for example, there are the *Libretto* in Italy, the *Kompetansepass* (competence passport) in Norway and the *ProfilPASS* in Germany. All such items describe in greater or lesser detail the outcomes of learning, regardless of whether or not this was formal. This drive for consistency in the different methods of documenting learning outcomes is an important issue in many countries which are seeking to achieve greater uniformity in how learning is encoded, so that prospective users can interpret the data more easily and quickly.<sup>2</sup>(p.44)

### National Perspective

According to the Council for Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL), "Over the past 30 years, hundreds of postsecondary education institutions have developed systems to award college credit for what people learn outside the classroom through corporate training, work experience, civic activity, and independent study. Through a process called Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), colleges and universities evaluate and award credit for this learning when they determine it to be similar in content, depth, and breadth to what they consider college-level learning."<sup>3</sup>

### Washington State Perspective

In Washington State, guidance on awarding credit for prior learning is provided in numerous ways, and by a wide range of entities, including the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) standards, Washington Administrative Code (WAC), Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC) transfer policy, and the Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges (WACTC) guidelines (each are included in the Appendix). In spite of, or perhaps

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<sup>2</sup> Werquin, P. *Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning: Country Practices*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/12/44600408.pdf> .

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.cael.org/pla.htm>.

because of, the numerous pieces that make up the policy for PLA, there appears to be a lack of clarity around these policies which results in a wide variance in institutional and individual assessor's practices.

## **ACCREDITATION AND PRIOR LEARNING**

Washington State universities, community colleges, and technical colleges are accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). The accreditation process and resulting regional accreditation is highly valued by institutions of higher education. NWCCU describes accreditation as follows:

Accreditation is a voluntary process of recognizing educational institutions for performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public... The accrediting process requires institutions and programs to examine their own goals, operations, and achievements, and then provides the expert criticism and suggestions of a visiting evaluation committee, and, later, the recommendations and judgments of the accrediting body.<sup>4</sup>

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) provides policy in five major areas, or Standards, for regionally-accredited institutions, including guidance on awarding credit for prior learning. NWCCU defines credit for prior learning as "credit granted toward the award of a certificate or degree for prior learning experiences that can be shown through various means of assessment to be the equivalent of learning gained through formal collegiate instruction."<sup>5</sup> Prior learning is measurable and meets or exceeds the learning outcomes for the course for which the student will be granted credit. In addition, NWCCU defines experiential learning as "learning acquired from work and life experiences, mass media, and independent reading and study." Standard Two ("resources and capacity") includes the following guidance on prior learning:

Credit for prior experiential learning, if granted, is:

- guided by approved policies and procedures;
- awarded only at the undergraduate level to enrolled students;
- limited to a maximum of 25% of the credits needed for a degree;
- awarded only for documented student achievement equivalent to expected learning achievement for courses within the institution's regular curricular offerings; and
- granted only upon the recommendation of appropriately qualified teaching faculty.

Credit granted for prior experiential learning is so identified on students' transcripts and may not duplicate other credit awarded to the student in fulfillment of degree requirements. The institution makes no assurances regarding the number of credits to be awarded prior to the completion of the institution's review process. The final judgment in accepting transfer credit is the responsibility of the receiving institution.<sup>6</sup> (For full text, see Appendix V)

## **METHODS OF ASSESSMENT**

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<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.nwccu.org/Glossary%20and%20FAQs/FAQs/FAQs.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.nwccu.org/Glossary%20and%20FAQs/Glossary/Glossary.htm#P>.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.nwccu.org/Standards%20and%20Policies/Standard%202/Standard%20Two.htm>.

It is important to note that, while there are many ways to assess student learning, all assessments are measuring a student's achievement of specific learning outcomes. When a student requests credit for prior learning, the institution assesses whether or not the student has achieved specific learning outcomes in one of the following ways:

- administering an assessment of student knowledge, skills, and abilities,
- assessing the comparability of previous training or education to determine if successful completion of that training or education would lead to achievement of the learning outcomes for the comparable course at the receiving institution, or
- accepting the credits from another institution, having **previously** determined that the other institution's course or program is comparable to that offered by the receiving institution.

Examples of these assessment methods include:

- **Experiential Learning Assessments:** may include various assessment methods, including individualized student portfolios or interviews, practical exams, or other methods as appropriate for the learning outcomes
- **Challenge Exams:** local tests developed by a college to verify learning achievement
- **Advanced Placement (AP) Exams:** a series of tests developed by The College Board initially for AP High School courses - 34 exams in 19 subject areas
- **College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams:** tests of college material offered by the College Board
- **Excelsior College Examination Program,** (formerly, Regents College Exams or ACT/PEP Exams), offered by Excelsior College, NY
- **DSST Credit by Exam Program (Formerly known as the DANTES Program):** owned and administered by Prometric, tests knowledge of both lower-level and upper-level college material through 38 exams.

In addition to individual assessment of student mastery of learning outcomes, institutions may evaluate other institutions' programs to determine that the credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic quality and level to credit it offers. Examples are:

- **American Council on Education (ACE) Guides:** published credit recommendations for formal instructional programs offered by non-collegiate agencies, both civilian employers and the military
- **Evaluation of Non-Regionally-Accredited Education:** program evaluation done by individual colleges of non-regionally accredited programs
- **Evaluation of Training:** program evaluations done by individual colleges of non-collegiate instructional programs

In accordance with NWCCU guidelines, requirements for accepting credits are similar to the requirements for awarding credits; that is, the credit must be for learning which has comparable outcomes to coursework offered at the receiving institution (see Appendix V). Each Washington State college and university determines the credits they will accept in direct transfer (primarily from other regionally-accredited institutions, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, CLEP exams, and ACE). The number of credits accepted through prior learning assessment and transfer is also limited by accreditation standards.

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

A recent CAEL study<sup>7</sup> of PLA practices at a sampling of community colleges across the country indicates that while colleges are aware of PLA and generally have policies in place, relatively few students utilize the service and few colleges indicate any plans to expand their efforts any time soon. Anecdotal evidence and initial survey results indicate that the situation in Washington parallels the results of the CAEL study.

At the same time, a variety of societal and educational forces over the past decade or more have made the need for consistent and effective PLA more critical than ever. Organizations (including educational ones) must value and use available resources in more productive ways while continuing to anticipate further reductions. The emphasis on time-to-degree and accountability has been prompting colleges to examine whether their policies and practices enhance or impede student movement through college. Finally, over the past twenty years higher education has devoted major efforts toward improving the assessment of student learning outcomes, including the assessment of prior experiential learning.

This report proposes a number of modifications to current policies and practices aimed at addressing the need for more efficient, effective, consistent and transparent PLA in Washington higher education. Suggestions provided by college and university staff, and members of the SSB 6357 PLA work group have been incorporated in these recommendations.

## CHALLENGES

### Broad Challenges

While it is difficult to determine how pervasive these specific problems are, the work group has identified some overarching challenges, which include:

**Transparency and communication:** Information about credit for prior learning is not readily available and apparent to new or prospective students. In a search of higher education institution's websites, information regarding PLA was difficult to locate, sometimes unavailable, and oftentimes inconsistent in terminology.

**Assessment:** The variety of ways that institutions evaluate prior learning and award credit lack consistency.

- Matching learning with outcomes: Prior learning experiences may match outcomes for a course in a program at one college, but not at others.
- Assessors: Assessors (usually faculty) may not have the training to understand the entire PLA process and most likely do not have the time to evaluate PLA on a one-on-one basis with students. Survey respondents indicate that staffing levels are a considerable barrier.
- Systematic approach: Assessment occurs ad hoc, rather than in a predictable, systematic manner.

**Coding and tracking:** With current practices in place, PLA is virtually impossible to track. Currently, PLA is noted in the comments section of student transcripts, but with no conformity. This makes it

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<sup>7</sup> Brigham, C. and Klein-Collins, R. Availability, Use and Value of Prior Learning Assessment within Community Colleges. July 2010. Retrieved from [http://www.cael.org/pdf/PLA\\_CommunityColleges.pdf](http://www.cael.org/pdf/PLA_CommunityColleges.pdf).

extraordinarily difficult to obtain accurate numbers of students who are receiving PLA and for which courses.

**Transferability:** Accreditation guidelines, the Direct Transfer Agreement (see Appendix IV) with Washington State baccalaureate institutions, and program-to-program transfer of coursework each create unique challenges related to transfer of credit for prior learning.

**Specialized, professional accreditation standards:** Professional-technical programs must ensure that any PLA credits awarded also meet the specialized accreditation standards of a variety of accrediting bodies, i.e., Allied Health programs such as Nursing and Dental Hygiene.

### **Focused Challenges**

In addition to, or as illustrations of, the broad challenges noted above, work group members representing a wide range of stakeholders offered these examples of challenges for particular groups:

- **Apprenticeships**

The Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council reports that it's been difficult for state approved apprenticeship programs of 6,000 or more hours such as the UA's plumbers, pipefitters, IBEW electrical, SMW sheet metal, and IUOE operating engineers to receive prior learning credits for in-state higher education degrees.

- **Military**

Military veterans encounter barriers to receiving credit for former experience as medics, when entering Allied Health programs.

- **Law Enforcement**

Graduates of the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission's Basic Law Enforcement Academy or other training encounter barriers to receiving prior learning credit when entering Criminal Justice programs.

- **Fire and Life Safety**

Graduates of the Washington State Fire Academy training programs encounter barriers to receiving prior learning credit when entering Fire Science or Fire Service Training programs.

- **Career College**

Graduates of private career college programs encounter barriers to receiving credit for prior learning or direct transfer credit, for example, when entering Allied Health programs at public institutions.

## **PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Guiding Principles**

The proposed revisions are responsive to the pressures and issues noted above and reflect a review of prior learning policies across Washington State and the country. In addition, the proposed revisions are based on the following principles:

- Students should consistently be awarded the maximum amount of college-level credit for prior learning which meets the college's standards, as appropriate for the student's educational and career path.
- Colleges and universities should retain the responsibility for assessing prior learning.

- Practices used in assessing prior learning should be consistent with outcomes assessment methodology used in other areas at colleges and universities.

The SSB 6357 PLA work group advocates for transparent policies and practices which increase the number of students being awarded academic credit for prior learning. The following recommendations are intended to increase transparency and consistency in PLA practices, including information dissemination, assessment of prior learning, award of credit, transcription of credit, and transfer of credit.

**Recommendations**

The work begun by the SSB 6357 PLA work group is just that – a beginning. Many areas for improvement have been identified with specific recommendations for addressing these areas noted below, including opportunities to revise policy and guidelines, align practice with policy, and improve institutional practices. In order to implement the bulk of these recommendations, an ongoing work group should be formed to coordinate and provide oversight for this work over time.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Responsible Group</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an ongoing statewide Prior Learning Assessment and Credit (PLAC) work group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A work group is needed to assess the impact of implementation of the revisions recommended in this report, and recommend further revisions to policy and practice, as needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Education Coordinating Board</li> </ul>

Additionally, the proposed ongoing work group will need to consult with key resource groups – each having their own areas of knowledge and expertise - throughout the Washington State higher education system. A few of these key resource groups have been identified in the table below.

The SSB 6357 PLA work group encourages all Washington State institutions of higher education – to the greatest extent possible - to adopt the following recommendations aimed at either revising existing policies and guidelines or improving system practice regarding PLA to reflect and align with existing policies:

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Key Resource Groups</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a single point of contact regarding PLA information, for each institution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer than half of the institutions queried were able to identify a single point of contact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registrars</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Key Resource Groups</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase transparency and consistency of information available to students and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Information should be readily available to prospective and current students. A clear description of Prior Learning Assessment policies and processes should be published in the college catalogue and on college websites, and students should be informed of the location of PLA information through quarterly schedules and in other marketing materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search of institution websites and online catalogs resulted in no, incomplete, or inconsistent PLA information found in more than half of the websites</li> <li>• Survey respondents indicate that the most likely source of information for students is the course catalog, student handbook, or class schedule.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Information Officers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop articulation agreements between institutions, where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate transfer of credit between institutions of higher education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulation and Transfer Council (ATC) and Registrars</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review work-based and other common training in career clusters and develop a matrix of possible credits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce duplication of effort involved in one-on-one assessments, and increase consistent award of credits for common training (e.g. career colleges, apprenticeships, military, fire service, and law enforcement training)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centers of Excellence Directors with respective industry advisory council members</li> <li>• Instruction Commission (IC); possibly Workforce Education Council (WEC), or Articulation and Transfer Council (ATC)</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Key Resource Groups</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve clarity and increase consistency of fee structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The WACTC-adopted guidelines for community and technical colleges are unclear, currently stating “actual costs plus reasonable”</li> <li>• Survey respondents indicated practices that range from “no charge” to “regular tuition cost for the five-credits of the portfolio course, plus regular tuition cost for any course credits that are awarded based on the portfolio documentation.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges (WACTC) and Registrars</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a consistent method of tracking PLA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for identification of high-impact practices which could be brought to scale across the state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional researchers with registrars</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions to track the number of students attempting and completing PLA, and the number of PLA credits being awarded.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey respondents indicated that they were unable to provide data because there was no tracking mechanism in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education, Research and Data Center(ERDC), Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System (PCHEES) Work Group</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of PLA credits accepted in transfer of academic credit to baccalaureate institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities allows up to 25% of a degree from PLA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and share examples of good practices.</li> <li>• Follow up with colleges identified as having transparent, consistent practices resulting in higher numbers of students receiving credit for prior learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify practices that support assessment and award of prior credit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLAC Work Group</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Key Resource Groups</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop online handbook for training to include accreditation issues, CHEA list of approved accrediting bodies, and single point of contact for each institution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove ambiguity and increase consistency by providing clear guidelines and examples of practices that support assessment and award of credit for prior learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SBCTC professional development staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide online and recorded training for those who will be advising students or assessing individual student's prior learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support accurate and complete academic counseling regarding PLA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SBCTC professional development staff with CTC Assessment Liaisons</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION

It is the belief of the PLA work group members that adoption of the above recommendations by all 40 public institutions of higher education (to the greatest extent possible) would result in improved consistency in assessing and awarding credit for prior learning and would increase the number of students receiving credit for prior learning. Building upon the principles, policies and practices that have been developed in other educational systems and within our own higher education system through implementation of the recommendations of the SSB 6357 PLA work group, a smoother, more transparent, and more consistent process for assessing and awarding credit for prior learning can be created -- moving more students further and faster toward their educational and career goals.

## Appendix I

### SSB 6357 PLA WORK GROUP PARTICIPANTS

#### Baccalaureate Institutions:

Mary Conley Law, St. Martin's University  
Leona Walker, The Evergreen State College

#### Career Colleges:

Paul DeGiusti, Corinthian Colleges/Everest College  
Gail McGaffick, Corinthian Colleges/Everest College  
Melanie Stewart, Corinthian Colleges/Everest College  
Gena Wikstrom, NW Career Colleges

#### Community and Technical Colleges:

Josh Baker, Highline Community College  
Walter Hudsick, Cascadia College,  
representing the Faculty Association for Community and Technical Colleges  
Robin Jeffers, Bellevue Community College  
Diane Martin, Green River Community College,  
representing the Articulation and Transfer Council  
Nancy Mullane, Whatcom Community College

#### Postsecondary Education Coordinating Boards and Councils:

Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges  
Laurel le Noble, Council of Presidents  
Noreen Light, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges  
Bill Moore, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges  
Mike Reilly, Council of Presidents  
Madeleine Thompson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board  
Jim West, Higher Education Coordinating Board  
Bryan Wilson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

#### Military:

Garfield Anderson, Southern Illinois University at Joint Base Lewis-McChord

#### Public Safety:

Anthony Anderman, Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission  
Jim Broman, Lacey Fire Department and Washington Fire Chiefs

#### Senate Staff:

Aldo Melchiori, Coordinator/Counsel

#### Students:

Megan Brownlee, Washington Students Association

#### Workforce and Apprenticeship:

Jaime Garcia, Health Workforce Institute  
Peter Lahmann, State Apprenticeship Coordinator Association  
Steve Lindstrom, NWCCF  
Madeleine Thompson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board  
Terry Tilton, Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council

## Appendix II

### WACTC GUIDELINES

Prior Learning Assessment guidelines for Washington State Community and Technical Colleges adopted by the Washington Association for Community and Technical Colleges in 2000.

#### Assessment

Prior learning assessment methods include portfolio development; course challenge and oral examinations; standardized tests; credits earned through the American Council of Education's Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services (ACE Guide); the systematic observation of skill demonstrations, including role plays and simulations; and the evaluation of case studies or other assignments.

- Assessment of the learning should be the responsibility of faculty who are content specialists from the awarding institution, and the names and qualifications of those making an assessment should be recorded.
- Practices used in assessing prior learning should be consistent with good contemporary assessment methodology.
- Learning assessed for post-secondary credit should be:
  - Linked to established learning outcomes or other criteria consistent with institutional standards for a given course. It should not be linked to time spent;
  - Transferable to contexts other than the one in which it was learned;
  - Current and relevant;
  - At a level of achievement equivalent to that of other learners engaged in studies at that level in that program or subject area;
  - Assessed using a range of strategies consistent with institutional standards for a given course.

#### Credit

- Faculty, as the content specialists, will assess and recognize prior learning and will make the determination of credit awards, with external advice as necessary. Credit may be granted only upon the recommendation of faculty who are appropriately qualified and who are on a regular appointment with the college on a continuing basis.
- Learners may be awarded recognition for demonstrating college-level learning that combines theory and practice, not for experience alone.
- The number of credits to be granted should be determined by the institution, based on their identified learning outcomes or other criteria.
- Credit will be awarded for demonstrated learning outcomes that are appropriate to the subject, course or program offered at the awarding institution.

## **Learner Orientation/Preparation**

- Learners should have access to adequate information about and orientation to all PLA processes. Information could be available in quarterly schedules and in other marketing materials from a single point of contact.
- Institutions should offer a variety of opportunities to support learners' progress through the assessment process; for example, single point of contact, advisors, one-stop access, and portfolio templates.

## **Administration and Support**

- **General**
  - Institutions will regularly monitor, review, evaluate and revise prior learning assessment policies and practices to maintain and improve institutional standards.
  - Policies and information about prior learning assessment processes, including provision for appeal, will be readily available.
  - Nationally administered examinations, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Dantes and CLEP could be brought into a course in the college catalog or can be handled separately based on local college decisions.
  - The Instruction Commission recommends that PLA must be tied to catalogue offerings.
- **Fees/Enrollment**
  - The fees for assessment will be based on actual costs plus reasonable. The fees will be based on the amount of credit requested, not the amount of credit awarded.
  - Fees should be published and consistently applied.
  - Fees should be consistent to the extent possible across the system.
- **Transcripts/Transfer**
  - Grades or credits will be assigned to PLA awards and will be entered accordingly on the learner's transcript.
  - Credits earned through PLA at Washington Community and Technical Colleges will be accepted toward the appropriate course or program at any other Washington Community and Technical College.
  - The percentage of a program's credits that can be obtained through PLA will be determined by the institution awarding the credential in accordance with Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges' policies.
- **Professional Development**
  - All personnel involved in PLA (PLA assessors, learner advisors, instructors of portfolio development/career/educational planning courses) should have appropriate skills and knowledge relevant to their roles and responsibilities in the process.
  - All personnel should work systematically towards continuous improvement in their own practice.
  - Institutions should assume the responsibility for supporting staff to acquire and maintain expertise in prior learning assessment services and provide opportunities for sharing information and expertise with other institutions.

<http://www.sbctc.edu/college/e-assesspriorlearning.aspx>

## Appendix III

### WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

#### **WAC 250-61-110 Student services and instructional resources requirements, Section 8.a**

(8) Transcripts and academic credentials. The institution shall provide accurate and appropriate transcripts of credit for enrolled students and diplomas for graduates.

(a) For each student, the institution shall maintain and make available a transcript that specifies the name of the institution, the name of the student, all courses completed, and an explanation of the institution's evaluation system. Each course entry shall include a title, the number of credits awarded, and a grade or written evaluation. The transcript shall distinguish credits awarded by transfer, for prior learning experience, and credit by examination.

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=250-61-110>

## Appendix IV

### INTERCOLLEGE RELATIONS COMMISSION

#### Current DTA Associate Degree Guidelines

Approved by ICRC October 10, 1996 – Effective Fall 1998

Proviso Updates through August 2009

For the purpose of these Guidelines, the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) Associate degree (sometimes called the Associate in Arts, Associate in Arts and Sciences, etc.) is defined as that degree awarded by a community college to students who have completed a transfer curriculum. In order to fulfill most general education requirements for a baccalaureate degree, the Associate degree should possess the following characteristics:

- I. Be issued only to students who have earned a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.00, as calculated by the degree awarding institution.
- II. Be based on 90 quarter hours of transferable credit including:
  - A. A minimum of 60 quarter hours of general education courses distributed as follows:
    - 1. Basic Requirements**
      - a. Communication Skills (10 credits)**

Must include at least two courses in English composition which total to at least six credits. Remaining credits, if any, may be an additional composition course or designated writing courses or courses in basic speaking skills (e.g., speech, rhetoric, or debate).
      - b. Quantitative/Symbolic Reasoning Skills (5 credits)**
        1. One of the following (5 credits)
          - 1) Symbolic reasoning course
          - 2) Quantitative reasoning course in computer science, statistics, mathematics, or other discipline for which intermediate algebra is a prerequisite.
        2. Intermediate Algebra Proficiency

All students must be proficient in intermediate algebra. May be satisfied by completion of high school mathematics through second year algebra, by course challenge or other examination demonstrating mastery of intermediate algebra skills, or by completion of an intermediate algebra course (to be numbered below 100) or a mathematics course for which intermediate algebra is a prerequisite.
    - 2. Distribution Requirements**

Within the distribution requirements, integrative, synthesizing courses and programs, including interdisciplinary courses and linked sequences of courses, are to be encouraged, especially for colleges requiring a minimum of two disciplines per area.

**a. Humanities<sup>1</sup> (15 – 20 credits)**

Selected from at least two disciplines. No more than 10 credits allowed from any one discipline. (No more than 5 credits in foreign language at the 100 level.) No more than 5 credits in performance/skills courses are allowed. Suggested disciplines include<sup>3</sup>: Art; Music History<sup>2</sup>; Philosophy<sup>2</sup>; Foreign Language/American Drama/Theater; Sign Language<sup>4</sup>; Speech; Literature

**b. Social Sciences<sup>1</sup> (15 – 20 credits)**

Selected from at least two disciplines. No more than 10 credits allowed from any one discipline. Suggested disciplines include<sup>3</sup>: History<sup>2</sup>; Philosophy<sup>2</sup>; Anthropology; Political Science; Economics; Psychology; Geography; Sociology

**c. Natural Sciences (15 – 20 credits)**

Selected from at least two disciplines. No more than 10 credits allowed from any one discipline. At least 10 credits in physical, biological and/or earth sciences. Shall include at least one laboratory course. Suggested disciplines include<sup>3</sup>: Astronomy; Geology; Biology; Mathematics<sup>2</sup>; Botany; Physics; Chemistry; Zoology

**3. Electives**

Other college-level courses, of which a maximum of 15 credits may be in college-level courses as defined by the community college and the remainder shall be fully transferable as defined by the receiving institution. Where appropriate, preparation courses for the major should be included in this course work.

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup>Within appropriate distribution areas, colleges are encouraged to develop curriculum which provides students with an understanding of and sensitivity to cultural differences by completing courses requiring study of cultures other than their own. To most, this may include minority, non-Western ethnic, or other area studies.

<sup>2</sup>A specific course may be credited toward no more than one distribution or skill area requirement.

<sup>3</sup>A list of suggested disciplines is subject to review by the ICRC.

<sup>4</sup>Faculty teaching first-year language courses are encouraged to include cultural aspects of study in their courses.

**CLARIFICATIONS:**

A. Associate degrees (DTA) meeting the distribution system in these Guidelines represent but one model for valid general education programs. Community colleges and baccalaureate institutions are encouraged to develop models, including interdisciplinary core requirements or vertical general education requirements with courses at the upper division level. Institutions using such alternative approaches are further encouraged to develop individual inter-institutional transfer agreements.

B. The Associate degree (DTA) agreement will provide for the fulfillment of college and university general education requirements only, and it is not intended that this agreement should cause modifications of unique requirements (religion, philosophy, etc.). Further, it should be clearly

understood that agreements based upon these Guidelines in no way alter admission criteria established by baccalaureate institutions.

- C. The Associate degree will generally provide the transferring student with at least 90 quarter (60 semester) credits upon entry to a baccalaureate institution.
- D. Community colleges should strictly enforce stated requirements without undue use of waivers, substitutions, or exceptions.
- E. Institutions developing mutual agreements must clearly identify degree titles and effective dates in order to provide clarity for students and their advisers and for transcript evaluation.
- F. Community colleges agree to develop precise language concerning their direct transfer Associate degree and to publish this information with all degree requirement information. Baccalaureate institutions agree to publish information about the details of their Associate degree agreements.
- G. Remedial courses (courses numbered below 100) shall not be included in the 90 quarter hours of the Associate degree.
- H. A list of the specific courses which satisfy Associate degree requirements shall be published.
- I. Community colleges and baccalaureate institutions agree to state their credit-by-exam policies in their catalogs. While accepting the Associate degree, receiving institutions shall grant credit for extra-institutional learning on the same basis for transfer students as for native students.

#### **PROVISOS September 2004**

(Updates through August 2009)

#### **(SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS BY INDIVIDUAL BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTIONS)**

##### Bastyr University

Prospective students who have completed an Associate Degree (DTA) from a Washington State community college may enter Bastyr University at the junior level, provided they have earned at least a 2.25 cumulative GPA and have completed the specified prerequisite courses outlined in Bastyr University's Health Sciences or Applied Behavioral Sciences Transfer Guide. Bastyr University does not accept transfer courses for which a student has earned a "D" grade.

##### Central Washington University

Central Washington University accepts the AA-DTA degree from Washington State community colleges and regionally accredited (NWCCU) schools. Students transferring with a complete DTA will normally transfer in junior standing and satisfy the Basic & Breadth Requirement at CWU. Students seeking a BA degree must complete two years of high school study or one year of college/university study of a single foreign language. CLEP exams are approved for the foreign language requirement.

##### Cornish College

A student transferring to Cornish College of the Arts who has earned a Direct Transfer Associate degree (DTA) will transfer sufficient credits to complete the Humanities and Sciences requirements at Cornish College of the Arts. This transfer credit will satisfy Cornish's Literature, English Composition, Western Civilization, Science, Social Science, Philosophy of Art, and Humanities and Sciences electives.

Transfer credit for major courses and for arts elective courses will be evaluated on a course-by-course basis. Courses are subject to the transfer guidelines established by Cornish College and may be approved for transfer after the student completes a portfolio review or audition.

### Eastern Washington University

Eastern Washington University recognizes the approved ICRC transfer degrees from Washington community colleges as fulfilling the university basic skills requirements, general education core requirements, and university competencies with the proviso that courses equivalent to intermediate algebra and EWU English 101 (English composition) be completed with a minimum grade of 2.0.

Students must also meet university proficiency requirements in English and Math, Cultural and Gender Diversity, International Studies, and the Liberal Arts Enrichment as set forth by the EWU implementation schedule. Many of these courses may be incorporated into the approved AA degree.

### Gonzaga University

Students who have completed the AA-DTA and AS-T degrees from Washington State community colleges are granted junior standing.

The AA-DTA fulfills the core requirements for the College of Arts and Sciences. The University core is fulfilled, except for the following: college mathematics course above intermediate algebra, Introduction to Speech, and six courses in Philosophy and Religious Studies.

AS-T coursework is evaluated on a course-by-course basis. Those students wishing to transfer to Gonzaga with an AS-T are advised to contact the Transfer Counselor well in advance for assistance with course selection.

### Heritage College

Students who have completed the appropriate Associate in Arts transfer degree from Washington community colleges are admitted with junior standing at Heritage College and have satisfied general college requirements provided that a logic/critical thinking course and a world history course are included. Transfer students who have not completed the Associate in Arts transfer degree must satisfy the general college requirements of Heritage College. This agreement is effective for students beginning classes for the first time at Heritage College in Spring 1991.

### Northwest University

Northwest University will accept a student who transfers with an AA degree (direct transfer program) from any public community college in Washington as having met the general college requirements, but not the religion component of the GCR.

### Pacific Lutheran University

Students who have completed the appropriate Degree Transfer Agreement (DTA) Associate Degree from any community college in Washington will be admitted with junior standing (60-64 semester hours) and will be regarded as having satisfied General University Requirements, except for one Religion course (Biblical Studies or Christian Thought, History, and Experience) and one Perspectives on Diversity course. PLU College of Arts and Sciences requirement is not fulfilled by the DTA Associate Degree.

### Saint Martin's University

Saint Martin's University recognizes the articulated Direct Transfer Associate degree (DTA) from Washington Community Colleges. Students completing the designated degree with a minimum GPA of

2.0 will be granted junior standing upon transfer. These students will have met the Saint Martin's general education requirements with the exception of a course each in philosophy (transferable) and religious studies (generally completed at Saint Martin's University).

#### Seattle Pacific University

Students who have earned, prior to matriculation at SPU, an approved direct transfer associate are considered to have completed the Exploratory Curriculum and University Core (but not University Foundations) requirements, as well as the foreign language and mathematics proficiency requirements of SPU. Most students who have earned an approved Direct Transfer degree enter with 90 credits and junior class standing. However, courses that do not meet SPU's minimum grade policies will not be transferred.

#### Seattle University

Students admitted to Seattle University for the first time with a completed Associate transfer degree will be granted 90 credits and junior standing. The following provisions apply: 1) Courses used to satisfy the DTA communication skills, quantitative/symbolic reasoning skills as well as the lab science requirement must be graded C- (1.5) or higher; 2) Additional philosophy and religious studies courses will be required to satisfy lower division Core at SU; 3) Specific requirements of professional degree programs and upper division core must be satisfied.

#### The Evergreen State College

Any student presenting the transfer Associate degree (DTA) will be granted junior status and considered as having met all general education requirements at The Evergreen State College.

#### Trinity Lutheran College

Trinity Lutheran College accepts the AA-DTA degree from Washington community colleges. Students entering Trinity with a completed DTA will be granted junior standing and be considered to have completed all general education requirements, excluding Trinity's Biblical Core.

#### University of Washington

The University of Washington transfers credit on a course by course basis. The UW's College of Arts and Sciences agrees that transfer students from Washington community colleges who complete approved associate degree programs, as determined by the UW Office of Admissions, will be considered to have satisfied the College's general education and proficiency requirements with the following provisos:

1. If the transfer degree requires 45 credits of distribution (15-15-15), in order to satisfy the Arts and Sciences Areas of Knowledge requirement, students will be required to take up to an additional 5 credits in each area plus an additional 15 credits drawn from their choice of one or more of the three areas.
2. Up to 15 credits in the student's major may be applied towards the 75 credit Areas of Knowledge requirement.
3. Students who complete first-year language courses as a part of the transfer degree distribution requirement, and later use that foreign language to satisfy the Arts and Science language proficiency requirement (see item 5), will not be allowed to use those foreign language credits towards the Arts and Science Areas of Knowledge requirement.

4. Aside from the above exceptions, approved degree-holders may count transfer courses toward the UW Areas of Knowledge requirements comparable to those the community college used toward associate degree distribution requirements, even if those courses would not otherwise be allowed toward specific Areas of Knowledge requirements.  
Students will be required to complete foreign language study through the 103-level or to demonstrate language proficiency at the 103-level through an examination.
5. Ten credits in courses emphasizing writing (W-courses or English composition) are required in addition to the 5 credit English composition requirement. W-courses must have attributes as defined by Arts and Sciences. If not completed as part of the transfer degree, this requirement must be completed at the University.

#### University of Washington – Bothell

Earning a transfer associate degree does not guarantee admission to UW Bothell. Students who transfer within this agreement must still meet program requirements to be considered for admission to a degree program.

The University of Washington Bothell transfers credit on a course by course basis. The University of Washington Bothell agrees that transfer students from Washington community colleges who complete approved associate degree programs, as determined by the UWB Office of Admissions will be considered to have satisfied general education and proficiency requirements and will generally have junior-level standing with the following provisos:

1. Courses equivalent to intermediate algebra and UW English composition be completed with a minimum grade of 2.0.
2. Successful completion of two years of high school study or successful completion of two quarters (through the 102 level) at a college/university of a single foreign language.
3. 100 level foreign language courses will only be transferred as electives
4. History, philosophy, journalism and communication courses will be transferred according to the course equivalency tables listed at:  
<http://admit.washington.edu/Requirements/Transfer/Plan/EquivalencyGuide>
5. If the transfer degree requires 45 credits of distribution (15-15-15), in order to satisfy the Arts and Sciences Areas of Knowledge requirement, students will be required to take up to an additional 15 credits from Humanities, Social Science, and Natural Sciences subject areas.

#### University of Washington – Tacoma

The University of Washington Tacoma transfers credit on a course by course basis. The University agrees that direct transfer students from Washington community colleges who complete approved associate degree programs, as determined by the UW Tacoma Office of Admissions, will be considered to have satisfied the University of Washington Tacoma's general education and proficiency requirements with the following provisos:

1. For guaranteed admission to the University of Washington Tacoma, students must earn a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.75 for all transferable academic course work at the time the first associate degree was completed and at the time of admission. The guarantee of admission does not apply to admission to any school or program nor to any particular major or professional field of study within the University. The minimum cumulative grade point average for guaranteed admission includes course work completed at all colleges attended.

2. Two years of one foreign language in high school or two quarters of a single foreign language at the college-level are required

Western Washington University

To substitute fully for WWU's General University Requirements (GURs) the DTA degree must include 90 credits, 75 of which must be on the Associate Degree Course List. Transfer distribution courses should be completed on a lettered or numeric grading scale, not P/F. Note: English 101 must be completed with a grade of C- or better.

Whitworth College

Whitworth College grants junior standing to holders of the approved ICRC transfer Associate degree. In addition, transfer students are required to complete the one-course Biblical literature requirement; one year of study in the same modern language at the college level; one of the three interdisciplinary Western Civilization Core courses (Core 150, Core 250, Core 350).

(<http://www.hecb.wa.gov/research/issues/documents/CurrentDTAAssociateDegreeGuidelines.pdf>)

## **Appendix V**

### **Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities**

#### Credit for Prior Learning:

2.C.7 Credit for prior experiential learning, if granted, is: a) guided by approved policies and procedures; b) awarded only at the undergraduate level to enrolled students; c) limited to a maximum of 25% of the credits needed for a degree; d) awarded only for documented student achievement equivalent to expected learning achievement for courses within the institution's regular curricular offerings; and e) granted only upon the recommendation of appropriately qualified teaching faculty. Credit granted for prior experiential learning is so identified on students' transcripts and may not duplicate other credit awarded to the student in fulfillment of degree requirements. The institution makes no assurances regarding the number of credits to be awarded prior to the completion of the institution's review process.

#### Transfer:

2.A.14 The institution develops, publishes widely, and follows an effective and clearly stated transfer-of-credit policy that maintains the integrity of its programs while facilitating efficient mobility of students between institutions in completing their educational programs.

2.C.8 The final judgment in accepting transfer credit is the responsibility of the receiving institution. Transfer credit is accepted according to procedures which provide adequate safeguards to ensure high academic quality, relevance to the students' programs, and integrity of the receiving institution's degrees. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that the credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic quality, and level to credit it offers. Where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements between the institutions.

<http://www.nwccu.org/Standards%20and%20Policies/Standard%202/Standard%20Two.htm>

## **APPENDIX VI**

### **Policy on Intercollege Transfer and Articulation among Washington Public Colleges and Universities (Umbrella Policy)**

Higher Education Coordinating Board  
917 Lakeridge Way, Olympia, WA 98504-3430

The “Policy on Intercollege Transfer and Articulation among Washington Public Colleges and Universities” was prepared in response to substitute House Bill 790, passed in 1983. The document was developed by representatives of Washington’s public and private baccalaureate institutions, the State Board for Community College Education (SBCCE), and the Council for Postsecondary Education (CPE).

The policy was adopted by the CPE on December 4, 1984, and was endorsed by the four-year Interinstitutional Committee of Academic Officers and adopted by the SBCCE. The policy was adopted on February 18, 1986, by the Higher Education Coordination Board (HECB), successor to the CPE.

It is the policy of the HECB that the procedures involving the transfer of students and the credits they have earned will be governed by the statewide transfer policy and agreement titled “Policy on Intercollege Transfer and Articulation Among Washington Public Colleges and Universities.” The policy will be implemented and maintained through the cooperative efforts of the state institutions of higher education, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), and the HECB.

#### **I. Introduction and Purpose**

##### **A. Intercollege Transfer**

The colleges and universities of Washington have long recognized the importance of facilitating travel for students moving from one institution to another in pursuit of their educational goals. Working both directly, college-to-college, and through voluntary associations such as the Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC), the state’s publicly supported institutions have established mutually acceptable guidelines and procedures to assist students in transition from college to college. The colleges work constantly, moreover, to obtain appropriate articulation between educational programs, to monitor transfer practices, and to improve the agreements, guidelines, and procedures that govern transfer.

The public colleges and universities in Washington wish now to record a formal agreement among themselves to establish and maintain the following policy on intercollege transfer and articulation. The statements which follow establish the policies and procedures for improving articulation between institutions and facilitating the transfer of students from one college or university to another. This agreement is an expression of the mutual respect and cooperation which prevail among the institutions of postsecondary education in Washington.

It is important to acknowledge that the State of Washington has a dual system of higher education composed of public and independent colleges and universities. A significant number of community college students complete their studies for the Bachelor’s degree in the independent sector. Although the provisions of this statement apply only to transfer from a community college to a public four-year institution, it should be noted that independent institutions work closely and in similar ways to facilitate

transfer from community colleges to these institutions. The independent institutions are commended for their sensitivity and efforts in this regard and are encouraged to continue in this pattern in the future.

#### B. Intercollege Relations Commission

A permanent interinstitutional committee on articulation and transfer has been established in the State of Washington, titled the Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC), a commission of the Washington Council on High School-College Relations. This Commission is composed of representatives appointed by the presidents of community colleges and baccalaureate institutions throughout the state and representatives from the HECB and SBCTC. It exists to develop sound recommendations for intercollege practices that directly affect students transferring between institutions of higher education in the State of Washington.

The Intercollege Relations Commission has the following responsibilities:

1. Facilitating the transfer of students and credits between and among community colleges and baccalaureate institutions.
2. Providing continuous evaluation and review of transfer degrees, programs, policies, procedures, and interinstitutional relationships that affect transfer of students.
3. Providing ways to resolve disputes regarding degrees, course equivalencies, and other transfer-related problems between or among member institutions.
4. Promoting articulation among the programs and curricula of member institutions

The Commission fulfills its responsibilities in the following ways:

1. By establishing and maintaining Associate Degree Guidelines for interinstitutional agreements under which community college transfer degrees may be used to satisfy general education requirements of baccalaureate institutions in the State of Washington.
2. By reviewing policies and procedures affecting intercollege transfer and recommending changes when appropriate.
3. By sponsoring conferences, seminars and other activities that promote Intercollege cooperation and articulation.

The Intercollege Relations Commission is convened at least two times during the academic year. Minutes of Commission meetings are distributed to postsecondary education institutions and appropriate state agencies.

#### C. Definition of Terms

1. Home credit: credit granted by a college or university for completion of its own courses or other academic work.
2. Transfer credit: credit granted by a college or university for courses or other academic work completed at another institution.
3. Native student: a student who entered a given college or university from high school, without matriculation first at another college.

4. Transfer student: a student who enters one college or university after completing one or more terms of study at another college or university.
5. Sending institution: college or university attended by a transfer student before transfer.
6. Receiving institution: college or university attended by a transfer student after transfer to another college.
7. Extra-institutional learning: study or learning conducted outside of programs or courses formally sponsored for credit by colleges and universities, such as non-sponsored experiential learning or prior life or work experience.

## **II. Transfer**

### **A. Institutional Requirements**

Each college and university has the responsibility and the authority to determine the requirements and course offerings of its programs in accordance with its institutional mission. These requirements and course offerings shall be published and communicated to students and the public. Colleges and universities shall treat transfer students and native students on an equitable basis. In particular, all students shall be expected to meet equivalent standards for regular admission to programs and to satisfy comparable program requirements.

Baccalaureate institutions shall notify community colleges of changes in lower division course requirements for baccalaureate degrees two years prior to their implementation for transfer students, and shall consult with community college academic officers when significant changes are under consideration.

Once changes in lower division baccalaureate degree course requirements have been adopted and published, baccalaureate institutions shall allow a grace period of two years before the changes become effective for transfer students. This policy applies to lower division course requirements of all subdivisions of an institution (schools, colleges, departments, etc.).

### **B. Transfer Admission**

Admission policies and specific program requirements shall be clearly stated in official documents. Transfer student admission will be determined following an assessment of academic performance and potential on the same basis as native students.

### **C. Transfer of Courses**

College-level courses offered by regionally accredited colleges and universities in the State of Washington shall normally be accepted in transfer by the receiving institution. In addition, some courses not normally transferable will be accepted as part of a DTA Associate degree. Information about the transferability of college courses shall be provided by all institutions through regular advising of prospective students and through college publications.

### **D. Transfer of Credits**

The numerical value of credits shall be maintained in transfer. When a course is acceptable in transfer, the receiving institution shall grant to the student the same number of credits as originally assigned to the course. When translation is required between semester and quarter credits, the conversion to be used is 1.5-quarter credits for each semester credit, or 2/3 of one semester credit for each quarter credit.

Credit earned in transferable courses shall be granted without regard to the date at which the course was completed. In some degree programs, especially in scientific and professional subjects, students may be required to acquire current knowledge or to refresh their knowledge by repeating courses taken at a prior date. Credit will not be granted a second time for such repeated courses. This policy applies equally to home credit and to transfer credit.

#### E. Transfer of Degrees

The public community colleges and baccalaureate colleges and universities in Washington have adopted an interinstitutional transfer agreement based on the DTA Associate Degree Guidelines developed by the Intercollege Relations Commission. Under this agreement, DTA Associate degrees that fulfill the terms of the ICRC Guidelines shall be accepted as satisfying general education requirements for the baccalaureate degree at the receiving institution. Students who complete a transfer Associate degree meeting the ICRC Guidelines shall normally be granted junior standing upon admission to a baccalaureate institution.

This agreement is designed to facilitate transfer between community colleges and baccalaureate colleges and universities. Students who enter community colleges with clear intentions regarding transfer to a particular baccalaureate college, with or without a DTA Associate degree, are urged to plan their course study by reference to the specific degree requirements of the college or academic program in which they intend to earn the Bachelor's degree. Program planning information shall be supplied to intended transfer students by all colleges.

#### F. Transfer of Grades

The grades assigned in transferable courses by the sending institution shall not be altered by the receiving institution. Courses completed with a grade of 'D' or above shall normally be accepted in transfer (except at The Evergreen State College, where a minimum of 2.0 or 'C' is required for transfer). Non-traditional grading practices require special handling, depending on the nature and circumstances of the program from which and to which a student is transferring, but receiving institutions shall take steps to assure all students equitable treatment.

#### G. Transfer of Vocational/Technical Courses and Programs

Vocational/technical courses offered by community colleges that are comparable to courses in baccalaureate programs or applicable to baccalaureate degrees as determined by the receiving institution shall be granted transfer credit. Up to 15 credits of coursework at the 100 level or above, that are otherwise non-transferable vocational/technical courses, may transfer as part of a DTA Associate degree meeting the ICRC Guidelines. In addition, inter-institutional agreements have been developed which permit students in some two-year technical programs to apply their technical studies toward baccalaureate degrees. Information about such agreements and about the transfer of vocational/technical courses shall be provided by the institution in their catalogs or transfer guides. Vocational/technical program agreements among colleges and universities shall be encouraged.

#### H. Credit for Extra-Institutional Learning and Credit by Examination

Some institutions grant credit for extra-institutional learning and credit by standardized examination when the knowledge demonstrated is applicable to a course, program, or degree. Determination of the credit value of extra-institutional learning is typically achieved through: (1) generally accepted faculty

assessment procedures, (2) nationally or regionally standardized examinations (e.g., CLEP, ACT), or (3) credit formula systems (e.g., 20 hours lab = 1 credit, or 30 clinical hours = 1 credit).

Credit for extra-institutional learning granted through standardized examinations or credit formula systems should be identified as such on the permanent record. An institution using such measurement techniques shall list the tests or formula systems in its college catalog along with the minimum score levels or credit formulas. Receiving institutions shall grant credit for extra-institutional learning on the same basis for transfer students as for native students. The policies of receiving institutions on awarding such credit shall be stated in their official catalogs.

#### I. Limitations on Transfer of Courses or Credits

Transfer credit is not normally awarded for the following types of study or coursework: (1) courses taken at colleges or universities that are not regionally accredited, (2) non-credit courses and workshops, (3) remedial or college preparatory courses, and (4) sectarian religious studies.

### III. Applicability of Transfer Credit

Acceptance of courses and credits in transfer means that they are normally applicable to degree requirements of the receiving institution. When students transfer with DTA, an Associate degree that meets the ICRC Guidelines, general education courses taken in completion of that degree shall normally fulfill general education requirements for the baccalaureate degree. When students transfer without an Associate degree, transferable courses will apply toward baccalaureate requirements in the same way as comparable home courses. All transfer students must satisfy the residence credit requirement of the degree-granting institution.

#### A. Course Comparability or Equivalency

1. Institutions shall identify, to the extent possible, transfer courses that are equivalent or parallel to home courses on a discipline-by-discipline basis. Information about course comparability shall be communicated to other institutions.
2. Transfer courses identified as comparable or equivalent to home courses shall be applicable toward baccalaureate prerequisites and requirements in the same way as the home courses.

#### B. Courses and Program Prerequisites and Degree Requirements

1. The determination of prerequisites and degree requirements, including minimum qualifying grades, is the responsibility of the institution awarding the degree. Each institution shall make public such prerequisites and requirements.
2. Provided students obtain minimum qualifying grades, transfer courses which have been identified as satisfying prerequisites or degree requirements shall be applicable toward those requirements upon transfer.

### IV. Academic Records and Transcripts

Institutions shall keep a complete permanent record for each enrolled student. This record shall identify the student and include all courses in which the student was enrolled, the status in each course at the end of each term, grades earned, cumulative grade point averages, numbers of credits earned (where applicable), the source of all credits granted, transfer credits, and any diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded by the home institution. (Since The Evergreen State College uses a non-traditional evaluation

and record system, its practices will vary somewhat from this description.) A description of the grading system of the institution shall normally be included with each transcript.

## **V. Student Rights and Responsibilities**

### **A. Non-Discrimination Policy**

All the colleges and universities of Washington maintain a policy of not discriminating against students because of their age, color, sex, disability, national origin, race, or religion, as published in official institutional bulletins.

### **B. Information Dissemination and Acquisition**

Students have the right to expect fair and equitable treatment from the public colleges and universities of Washington, both sending and receiving institutions. They have the right to expect reasonable efforts on the part of colleges to make accurate and current information available. They have, in turn, the responsibility of seeking out current information pertaining to their educational objectives and for acquiring appropriate information when they change their academic plan. When a student changes a major or degree program, the student shall assume full responsibility for meeting the new requirements. Colleges shall make every effort to help students make transitions as smooth as is feasible.

## **VI. Review and Appeal**

### **A. Student Appeals**

Students who encounter transfer difficulties shall first seek resolution through the receiving institution's transfer officer. If not resolved at this level, the student may appeal in writing to the transfer officer of the sending institution. The transfer officers shall confer and attempt to resolve the problem. In the event the transfer officers cannot resolve the issue within two weeks, the matter will be referred to the two chief academic/instructional officers for resolution. Within two weeks, after the academic officers have conferred, a decision will be rendered by the chief academic officer of the receiving institution.

### **B. Interinstitutional Disputes**

In the event of interinstitutional transfer disagreements, it is the responsibility of the two transfer officers to resolve the dispute wherever possible. If not resolved at this level within two weeks, the two transfer officers will refer the matter to the two chief academic/instructional officers for resolution. Unresolved inter-institutional transfer disputes shall be referred for review and recommendation to a committee composed of three representatives appointed by the Washington Association of Community College Presidents and three representatives of the Interinstitutional Committee of Academic Officers of the state's public four-year institutions. A report to the two institutions will be rendered when this committee has completed its deliberations. The chief academic officers of the affected institutions shall respond in a formal report to the committee within four weeks indicating actions to be taken in response to committee recommendations.

## **VII. Implementation and Revision of Policy**

Specifications in this document are intended to be minimum standards for transferability in order to maintain institutional flexibility. This policy shall be implemented and maintained through the cooperative efforts of the state institutions of higher education, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the Higher Education Coordinating Board. It shall be implemented no later than Fall Term, 1985.

**VIII. Publication of Policy**

This policy shall be published and disseminated by the Intercollege Relations Commission, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the public colleges and universities of the State of Washington.

**IX. Evaluation of Policy**

The Higher Education Coordinating Board will monitor transfer issues referred to the committee appointed to review and recommend the resolution of transfer disagreements. The Board will present a biennial report summarizing the operation of the policy to the Governor and the Legislature.