South Carolina Commission on Higher Education Report on Proviso 117.139

April 30, 2023

Confirmation of Compliance with Proviso 117.139

Proviso 117.139 of the Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations Act directed the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) to continue its work with the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education and the public institutions of higher learning to develop policies that:

> *"...guarantee students who have earned an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree from a public two-year institution of higher learning shall receive a minimum of sixty transfer credit hours at a public four-year college or university and shall be given a junior status at the college or university. Course prerequisites and minimum credit requirements for awarding degrees shall still apply. The Commission shall report on the implementation of these policies to the Chairmen of the Senate Finance Committee, House Ways and Means Committee, Senate Education Committee, and House Education and Public Works Committee by April 30, 2023."*

In June 2022 the CHE verified that all public four-year colleges and universities award students who have earned an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science degree from a public two-year institution of higher learning a minimum of 60 transfer credits and junior status.

Despite continued institutional compliance with requirements of the Proviso, work remains to be done to improve the state's system of transfer. This report not only confirms institutional compliance with Proviso 117.139 but also documents the CHE's additional initiatives to improve the transfer of academic credits between institutions.

Introduction

Governor Henry McMaster and South Carolina policy makers are leading the development of a cohesive, unified workforce that will boost South Carolina's rapidly growing economy. Higher education is critical to this effort in training, educating, and upskilling South Carolinians so they may earn sustainable salaries and wages for themselves and their families. Effective, user-friendly, and student-centered transfer policies bolster workforce development with strengthened career pipelines and increased student degree completion, while minimizing time to degree completion.

Transfer policies and articulation agreements provide clear and accessible transitions between and across technical or community colleges and four-year institutions. Statewide transfer initiatives are also especially helpful for highly mobile students who may move among multiple two- and four-year institutions before degree completion.

An effective, efficient statewide transfer policy and system directly contributes to on-time degrees and credentials and supports the burgeoning South Carolina economy and the economic well-being of South Carolinians. This report details current efforts to improve the transfer experience for South Carolina students while supporting the CHE's *Ascend 60X30* strategy to increase higher education attainment in the state.

Statutory Authority for Transfer

The General Assembly requires the CHE to establish standards and procedures for the transferability of courses at the undergraduate level between two- and four-year colleges and universities (S.C. Code of Laws Title 59, Chapter 103, Section 45). The CHE also promulgates regulations to provide further direction and structure.

Since 2021, the General Assembly's interest in student mobility has increased, with the passage of budget provisos directing responsible state agencies to work together and ensure students with Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degrees can transfer to public four-year colleges.

Proviso 117.152 of the 2021-22 Appropriations Act required the CHE to work with the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education and the public institutions of higher learning to develop student transfer policies that would ensure students with an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree from a public two-year institution receive a minimum of 60 transfer credit hours at a public four-year college or university and be given junior status at the college or university. Proviso 117.139 of the 2022-23 Appropriations Act directed the CHE to continue its

work with the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education and the public institutions of higher learning to develop student transfer policies. The Commission has confirmed that students who earn AA or AS degrees from a public two-year institution of higher learning receive a minimum of sixty transfer credit hours at public four-year colleges and universities and are awarded junior status at these institutions. Course prerequisites and minimum credit requirements for awarding degrees still apply.

At the time of this report, the General Assembly is deliberating the 2023-24 Appropriations Act. During the deliberations, the House and the Senate passed differing transfer provisos. On March 15, the House adopted Proviso 117.166, which would expand the provisions of Proviso 117.139; students who have earned an AA or AS degree would receive at least 60 transfer credits, be classified as a junior, and will have fulfilled the general education requirements of the receiving, four-year institution.

Further, Proviso 117.166 would require the public four-year institutions to facilitate a reverse transfer option for South Carolina technical college students who enroll in their institution without completing the AA or AS degree. Reverse transfer allows for a student, upon successful completion of coursework at the four-year institution, to transfer credits back to the technical college and apply them toward an associate degree.

On April 20, the Senate adopted, among its budget recommendations, Proviso 117.135. This proviso would direct the CHE, the South Carolina Technical College System, and the public colleges and universities to implement the SC Transfer Task Force's Action Plan by April 30, 2024.

While the House and Senate provisos differ, both underscore the importance of credit mobility to ensure student success. The CHE remains steadfast in its commitment to support South Carolina's transfer students in their journey to degree attainment. The CHE and its partners continue to enhance current transfer practices while developing new practices and strategies. As statewide transfer work advances, the CHE and its partners will continue to provide information and input to the General Assembly as requested, ensuring leaders and stakeholders are equipped with the most current information and data.

SHEEO/Gardner Institute State Transfer Initiative

In August 2021, all South Carolina higher education institutions were invited to join an ad hoc transfer task force. The CHE, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), and the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education (JNGI) facilitated the task force, with more than 30 key South Carolina transfer-related personnel from the state's two-year technical colleges, public four-year colleges and universities, and independent colleges (see Appendix A). The task force used an evaluation model comprised of a set of aspirational principles to analyze the transfer and articulation systems and policies in the state. Priorities were also aligned with the CHE's 2019 *Ascend 60X30* strategy to increase higher education attainment from 48 percent in 2023 to 60 percent by 2030. The focused work of the ad hoc transfer task force resulted in an action plan that includes recommended practices to maximize transfer student success for South Carolinians.

The CHE and staff collaborated closely with the task force by committing agency and staff resources to support the process and recommendations. The recommendations presented in the action plan represent the higher education community's commitment to boost comprehensive and fair educational attainment options that will lead to more economic opportunity for all South Carolinians.

SC Transfer Task Force Recommendations[1]

1. Solicit and appoint institutional transfer liaisons at each participating institution, and convene regular statewide meetings for transfer policy development, collaboration, and professional learning.

2. Develop, manage, and curate a robust statewide data system, and provide the CHE with the authority to request data from all participating higher education institutions.

3. Convene a stakeholder group to review and address transfer articulation resources and needs, to :

    a. improve or replace the South Carolina Transfer and Articulation Center (SC TRAC) resource;

    b. develop a matrix to standardize courses for equivalent, transferable, degree benefiting credit;

    c. develop a process for using common general education learning outcomes to supersede course equivalencies;

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[1] To access full SC Transfer Task Force Report, visit the CHE Transfer Action Plan webpage at www.che.sc.gov/transfer

d. establish common standards for evaluating and awarding credit consistently and with maximum applicability to degrees, and

e. Negotiating a statewide articulation among the South Carolina Technical College System (SCTCS), four-year public institutions, and participating institutions of the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU) to recognize the A.A. and A.S. degrees as fulfilling baccalaureate general education requirements.

4. Require public and participating independent institutions to ensure students are adequately informed of transfer options and the transfer resources available to them.

5. Develop a plan to facilitate and incentivize reverse transfer.

6. Request state funding to establish student transfer scholarships and a statewide awareness campaign for transfer.

SC TRAC

The South Carolina Transfer and Articulation Center (SC TRAC) was created as a one-stop shop for transfer students, advisors, and institutional leadership. SC TRAC provides students with access to transfer agreements developed between public institutions in a searchable database and enables students to compare current courses against equivalent courses at another institution. In a recent review of SC TRAC from January 2023, a total of 1,468,351 current course equivalencies were found. In addition, the analysis indicated 1,345 total transfer agreements. Transfer agreements can be updated at any time with a recommendation to be reviewed annually by the institutions.

Review of the 86 Universally Transferable Courses

South Carolina currently has 86 courses listed in SC TRAC which are deemed universally transferrable by South Carolina higher education institutions. The Learning and Curricular Pathways Dimension Committee associated with the SHEEO/Gardner Transfer project initiated a review of the 86 courses to determine how and where in the curriculum those courses were transferred between institutions. Six institutions, representing research, four-year comprehensive teaching, technical, and independent institutions were sampled to assess the variation of equivalencies. Findings indicated 31 of the courses (36 percent) were coded as direct equivalents for all six institutions. When adjusted to review the majority (at least four institutions), 68 courses (79 percent) were coded as direct equivalents. Additionally, there were 10 courses (12 percent) that were commonly coded as elective credit. As a result of the sample review, the CHE and transfer leadership council will continue to examine the 86 courses for transferability. The final evaluation will be representative of all public higher education institutions in South Carolina.

South Carolina Transfer Excellence Convening

On April 3, 2023, the CHE and the SHEEO/JNGI transfer task force members hosted the inaugural Transfer Excellence Convening. The convening was a one-day event that provided South Carolina transfer champions from each institution the opportunity to learn more about the work and formally recognize the SHEEO/JNGI transfer task force, better understand the transfer report, and collaborate on promising transfer practices implemented at each institution. Approximately 140 transfer champions from across the state, representing 45 two- and four-year, technical, public, and independent institutions, as well as other higher education organizations attended the convening (participant list included in *Appendix B*.)

Participants at the convening heard from the SHEEO/JNGI transfer task force, the President and Executive Director of the CHE, and state and national leaders in transfer. While participants initially focused their conversations on articulation agreements and credit mobility, they quickly learned the importance of holistic transfer support and incorporating student success measures into their transfer practices. Participants and facilitators found that once the student experience was incorporated into the conversation, richer dialogue followed. The convening culminated in a South Carolina Promising Practices document that institutions across the state can use to renew or implement transfer practices on their campuses.

To ensure the success of future transfer excellence convenings, the CHE requested participants complete a post-convening survey. Feedback in the survey supported the appropriateness of content shared and showed appreciation for the opportunity to connect with colleagues from different institutions and sectors, along with support for the overall usefulness of the convening in furthering transfer initiatives in South Carolina. The results indicated 80 percent of participants found the interactive session on South Carolina Promising Practices most beneficial, and they are eager for ongoing conversations and collaborations to ensure South Carolina is the national leader in transfer success. The CHE has published all convening materials on its website for informational purposes and future use.

Transfer Promising Practices

The CHE, in collaboration with South Carolina two- and four-year, technical, state, and independent institutions, is developing a set of South Carolina promising practices to support seamless transfer between institutions while maximizing credits toward degree completion. During the transfer convening, attendees discussed a draft version of initial promising practices (*Appendix C*). All participants received a printed or electronic version to review and enhance. Reactions to the draft guide varied, however, many participants celebrated the document as an

initial step towards compiling transfer best practices for the state of South Carolina. Once the participants reviewed the draft guide, they were asked to collaborate with their institutional representatives to compile a list of their institutional promising practices. After they completed their list, participants were asked to share their discussion with other institutions' participants. These two different conversations enabled institutional representatives to think more deeply about their institutional policies and practices, including gaps in transfer support and communication. Additionally, after reflection on their own policies and practices, participants could then learn from other institutions' representatives to fill those gaps and enhance their transfer practices and policies. The CHE collected the institutions' promising practices documents and assembled a comprehensive document that outlines each institution's practices. Next, the CHE will collaborate with the transfer leadership team to finalize a South Carolina Promising Practices document.

Next Steps

To begin implementation of the SC Transfer Task Force's recommendations from the action plan, a Transfer Leadership Council must first be established: this council should be comprised of representatives from the different sectors of higher education institutions (public research, doctoral/professional, regional, comprehensive, technical, and independent institutions). The CHE is coordinating the search for representatives and is working with the CHE Advisory Committee on Academic Programs (ACAP) to identify members for the council. The council will work closely with ACAP and institutional leaders, as the CHE values their feedback and recommendations regarding representatives.

Once the Transfer Leadership Council has been established, it will be responsible for prioritizing and implementing the recommendations outlined in the Transfer and Articulation Action Plan. Additionally, the council will need to facilitate the creation of regional liaisons and working groups. The regional liaisons will be responsible for addressing transfer practices and challenges associated with their specific region. The working groups are responsible for four keys areas of transfer: engagement, governance strategy, technical supports, and academic pathways. These transfer sub-groups will report back to the council to ensure outcomes are being met and enable the council to report to stakeholders on the progress of implementation.

In conjunction with the establishment of the Transfer Leadership Council, the CHE is tasked with two responsibilities to further the transfer work. First, the Commission will continue evaluation of the 86 courses, allowing the Academic Pathways team to have a clear starting point for their work. Courses which are direct equivalencies will remain active, while courses which are not seamlessly transferred will be assessed to determine continued inclusion in the 86. Additionally,

the CHE will compile information on course learning outcomes for the 86 courses to provide additional context for the Academic Pathways team. Second, the CHE, along with institutions, will continue to refine the South Carolina Promising Practices document. This document will serve as a tool for all institutions as they continue to support transfer students across South Carolina. The CHE is dedicated to making South Carolina the leader in transfer, which will require updating and creating new resources. To allow for universal access to those resources, the CHE will create a dedicated transfer website that will provide transfer resources for students, institutions, and other stakeholders.

While there is much South Carolina has accomplished, there is significant momentum and motivation for a statewide transfer agreement to advance the state's 60x30 attainment goal. The efforts reported in this document represent significant phases in the process, led by the CHE and in partnership with academic leaders across the state. Annual reporting on the progress of transfer will continue to ensure milestones and outcomes are met and shared with all stakeholders.

Appendix A. SHEEO/Gardner Transfer Task Force Members

Name	Position	Institution
Dawn Bare	Associate Registrar for Transfer Evaluations	College of Charleston
Jessica Berry	Professor and Chair of the Department of Speech Pathology & Audiology	South Carolina State University
Jen Booth	Registrar	Columbia International University
Kelly Brennan	Associate Provost for Enrollment Management	The Citadel
Aimeé Carter	Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs	SC Technical College System
Lisa Chestney	Director of Transfer Resources Center and Interim Registrar	College of Charleston
Ron Cox	Dean	University of South Carolina-Palmetto College
Donna Foster	Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance	Piedmont Technical College
Lauren Gellar	Director of Healthcare Studies; Professor, College of Health Professions	Medical University of South Carolina
Kristen Gerhardt	Director of Bridge Programs & Education Partnerships	Tri-County Technical College
Amy Gutzmer	Director of Marketing/Communications for Online/Continuous Learning	Anderson University
Susan Henderson	Provost	Coker University
Antonia Hill	Student	University of South Carolina Columbia
Heather Hoppe	Registrar	Horry-Georgetown Technical College
Trena Houp	Director of Academic Programs	University of South Carolina Columbia
Lillian Hunter	Assistant Registrar	Tri-County Technical College
David Kuskowski	Associate VP for Enrollment Management	Clemson University
Brian Mallory	Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research	University of South Carolina Beaufort
Aaron Marterer	Assistant Vice President and University Registrar	University of South Carolina Columbia
Clifton Myles	Vice President of Academic Affairs	Denmark Technical College
Greg Oakes	Dean for Graduate Online and Extended Education	Winthrop University
Jeff Perez	President and CEO	South Carolina Independent Colleges/Universities
Kim Purdy	Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs	University of South Carolina Upstate
Mary Von Kaenel	Director, Bridge to Clemson and Transfer Academic Programs	Clemson University
Ann Williams	Registrar	Francis Marion University
Lloyd Willis	Interim Dean, College of Graduate and Online Studies	Lander University
Casey Woodling	Director of Academic Outreach and Continuing Education	Coastal Carolina University
Karl Wright	Provost	Claflin University
Donna Zeek	Director of Curriculum, Dean of School of Interdisciplinary Studies	Midlands Technical College

Appendix A.1. SHEEO/Gardner Transfer Project Leadership Team

Name	Position	Institution
Argentini Anderson	Assistant Director, Office of Academic Affairs and Licensing	SC Commission on Higher Education
Stephanie Davidson	Independent Consultant	State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)
Mariam Dittmann	Director, Office of Academic Affairs and Licensing	SC Commission on Higher Education
Kelli Fellows	Dean, Online and Graduate Programs	Newberry College
John Gardner	Founder and Executive Chair	Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education
Jesulon Gibbs-Brown	Professor	South Carolina State University
Monica Goodwin	Director, Office of Data-Research and IT	SC Commission on Higher Education
Samuel Grubbs	Program Manager, Office of Academic Affairs and Licensing	SC Commission on Higher Education
Michael Igbonagwam	Program Manager, Office of Strategic Initiatives and Engagement (Project Lead)	SC Commission on Higher Education
John Lane	Vice President of Academic Affairs and Equity Initiatives	State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)
Sid Parrish	Vice President for Academic Affairs	Newberry College
Christopher Robinson	Senior Program Manager, Office of Data-Research and IT	SC Commission on Higher Education
Eric Skipper	Provost	University of South Carolina Beaufort
Rosline Sumter	Vice President—Academics, Student Affairs, and Research	SC Technical College System
Bunnie Ward	Director, Office of Strategic Initiatives and Engagement	SC Commission on Higher Education

Appendix B. Institutions and Agencies Represented at the Transfer Excellence Convening

Aiken Technical College	Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College
Allen University	Piedmont Technical College
Anderson University	South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities
Central Carolina Technical College	South Carolina Technical College System
Charleston Southern University	South Carolina State University
Clemson University	Southern Wesleyan University
Coastal Carolina University	Spartanburg Community College
Coker University	Spartanburg Methodist College
College of Charleston	Technical College of the Lowcountry
Columbia College	The Citadel
Columbia International University	Tri-County Technical College
Converse University	Trident Technical College
Denmark Technical College	University of South Carolina- Aiken
Florence Darlington Technical College	University of South Carolina- Beaufort
Francis Marion University	University of South Carolina- Columbia
Furman University	University of South Carolina- Lancaster
Greenville Technical College	University of South Carolina-Palmetto College
Horry-Georgetown Technical College	University of South Carolina- Salkehatchie
Lander University	University of South Carolina- Union
Midlands Technical College	University of South Carolina-Upstate
Newberry College	Winthrop University
North Greenville University	York Technical College
Northeastern Technical College	

Appendix C. Transfer Promising Practices (SC Transfer Excellence Convening)

Involvement

- o Mandate institution's Transfer Liaison has the responsibility to facilitate all communications concerning transfer and articulation.
- o Designate a transfer articulation agreement coordinator.
- o Identify institutional transfer implementation and policy leaders.
- o Engage the Provost and Faculty directly to address transfer, articulation, and course equivalency issues.

Framework for Articulation Agreements

- o Agreements may range in scope from entire programs to individual courses.
- o Specify any time limits for degree completion for students after initial entry into a program, and any applicable course validity expiration dates.
- o Develop an institutional process where every agreement goes through the same review, development, signature, and implementation process.
- o Establish the types of agreements the institution will sign and implement.
- o Agreements should be signed and dated by the institutional/system chief academic officer or designee.
- o Establish institutional flexibility regarding agreements.
- o Stipulate a review schedule for course articulation procedures.
- o Bind on all parties until such time as they might be formally modified through an appropriate, multilateral, and consultative process.

Accessible Information

- o Make transfer and articulation agreements easily accessible online utilizing SC TRAC or other designated state database.
- o Encourage students to utilize SC TRAC or other designated state database to evaluate "what if" transfer scenarios.
- o Determine how transfer equivalency information and policy will be displayed on institutional websites and social media outlets.
- o Notify stakeholders, including students, when agreements are signed.

- Ensure transparency in credit mobility, so students transfer credits efficiently.

Collaboration

- Exchange of pertinent information, such as catalogs, course syllabi, course outlines, learning outcomes, and/or curriculum guides, and appropriate data, in a timely manner.
- Prioritize development of agreements with institutions from which they receive the largest number of transfer students.
- Construct and implement student-centered agreements and policies.

Assessment

- Review and assess the articulation process in its entirety every 4-5 years.
- The transfer process should be timely, efficient, predictable, and sensitive to student needs.
- Stipulate a review schedule for course articulation procedures.
- Support development or discontinuation of agreements using data.

Student Services & Support

- Commit dedicated personnel, structures, and resources for transfer students.
- Review and assess transfer policies often to reduce student barriers.
- Create institutional transfer guides.
- Assign advisors and clearly communicate information to prospective transfer students.
- Continuously monitor student progress, provide feedback, and intervene quickly.
- Dedicate financial resources to support transfer students.
- Assist transfer students with accessing financial resources.
- Create dedicated offices, spaces, and centers for transfer students.
- Provide ongoing professional development for faculty and staff working with transfer students.

References

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Jenkins, D., & Fink, J. (2015). What we know about transfer. New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students. (2020, March 9). *Evolution of transfer support: Creating center, removing barriers, and implementing best practices* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeqkYaZ2VG4

Appendix D. Next Steps Feedback from the Transfer Excellence Convening[2]

- Create a statewide council for transfer

- Implement the Transfer Report recommendations

- Determine a timeline for implementation

- Enhance statewide policies for transfer access

- Standardization of transfer policies and practices

- Comprehensive plan for articulation agreements

- Updating and ongoing usage of transfer database (like SC TRAC)

- More institution collaboration and access to resources

- Define universal transfer terminology

- Professional Develop Opportunities within the State

- Investment in need-based funding for transfer students

- Data collection and sharing

- Creation of a framework for promising practices

- Development of a transfer guide like SC Life breakdown

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[2] This is a condensed version of the responses with duplicate suggestions removed.