**Advancing Transfer Credit Mobility, Transparency, and Student Success**
**Institution:** Coastal Carolina University (CCU)
**Presenter:** Leslie Barrett Brown, Associate Director for College Pathways
**Session Type:** Conference Presentation and Q&A
**Date:** 10/13/2026
**Topic:** Improving Transfer Pathways, Credit Mobility, and Degree Completion
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**1. Session Overview**

Leslie Barrett Brown, Associate Director for College Pathways at Coastal Carolina University, presented several initiatives designed to improve transfer credit mobility, increase transparency, and support student degree completion.

The presentation emphasized the importance of ensuring that transfer credits not only transfer between institutions but also fulfill meaningful degree requirements.

Coastal Carolina University has been working closely with the South Carolina Technical College System to strengthen transfer pathways, improve credit evaluation processes, and provide students with earlier access to academic advising and transfer information.

**Central Message:** Transfer success should be measured not simply by the number of credits accepted but by how effectively those credits apply toward a student's degree.

**2. Key Discussion Points**

**A. Understanding the Transfer Student Landscape**

The presenter highlighted several challenges affecting transfer students nationally and within South Carolina.

- Approximately 43 million Americans have some college education but have not earned a degree.
- Approximately 500,000 of those individuals reside in South Carolina.
- Community colleges serve approximately 40% of undergraduate students annually.
- Many community college students are first-generation students who face additional barriers to navigating transfer processes.
- Although many community college students intend to transfer and earn bachelor's degrees, significantly fewer successfully complete that pathway.

The presenter emphasized that students often accumulate credits that do not apply toward their intended degree programs, creating additional costs and delaying graduation.

**Key Takeaway:** Institutions must prioritize degree-applicable credits rather than simply accepting credits as general electives.

**B. Course-to-Core Project**

One of the primary initiatives discussed was Coastal Carolina University's Course-to-Core Project.

This initiative emerged from recommendations developed through an academic pathways working group examining South Carolina's list of 86 universally transferable courses.

Although these courses are guaranteed to transfer among South Carolina's public four-year institutions, some were previously accepted only as elective credits rather than fulfilling general education requirements.

**Actions Taken:**

1. CCU reviewed how the 86 courses transferred into its curriculum.
2. Course syllabi were collected from South Carolina technical colleges.
3. CCU's Core Curriculum Committee evaluated course learning outcomes.
4. The committee identified 25 courses that could fulfill general education requirements.
5. CCU developed a system of zero-credit "tokens" to recognize the applicable general education requirement.

The token system allows students to retain their original transfer credit while receiving recognition for meeting specific general education learning outcomes.

For example, a mathematics course that transfers as three elective credits may also receive a zero-credit quantitative literacy token, allowing it to satisfy a general education requirement.

**Reported Results:**

- Approximately 698 Course-to-Core tokens were awarded between Fall 2025 and Fall 2026, according to the presentation.
- Previously elective-only courses are now satisfying general education requirements.
- Students may avoid repeating coursework covering learning outcomes they have already achieved.

**Key Takeaway:** Evaluating courses based on learning outcomes can increase the usefulness of transfer credits without compromising academic standards.

**C. Military Credit Mobility**

CCU is expanding its credit mobility initiatives to recognize military education and training.

The presenter discussed the use of Joint Services Transcripts (JSTs) and American Council on Education (ACE) military credit recommendations.

ACE course exhibits provide detailed information regarding learning outcomes, instructional methods, and course content.

This information helps faculty determine whether military training satisfies university course or general education requirements.

**Reported Progress:**

- More than 145 credit hours were adjusted from elective credit to degree-applicable credit during the previous year.
- The Core Curriculum Committee reviewed approximately 15 military course exhibits.

- Of those reviewed, 14 were approved to fulfill designated general education requirements through the token system.

CCU is also working to establish reusable equivalencies so that students presenting previously evaluated military courses can receive appropriate credit without undergoing repeated individual reviews.

**Key Takeaway:** Military training should be evaluated consistently and transparently to recognize students' existing knowledge and reduce unnecessary coursework.

**D. Associate Degree Transfer Pathways**

The presentation addressed Coastal Carolina University's transfer pathways for students completing Associate in Arts (AA), Associate in Science (AS), and Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degrees.

CCU has an agreement providing automatic admission to students from the South Carolina Technical College System who complete qualifying AA, AS, or AAS degrees.

Students transferring with AA or AS degrees receive a general education core waiver.

The university is also developing AAS transfer pathways that meet appropriate general education requirements.

**Examples Discussed:**

- Teacher Education
- Criminal Justice Technology
- Business Administration

Through partnerships with Horry-Georgetown Technical College, CCU has worked to establish designated transfer tracks that align technical college coursework with university requirements.

Some pathways include 30 credit hours of general education coursework to support applicable accreditation requirements.

The university is also using transfer articulation agreement identifiers to track students entering through specific pathways.

These identifiers allow the institution to evaluate student participation, transferred credit hours, academic performance, and progress toward graduation.

**Key Takeaway:** Program-specific transfer agreements help create clearer academic pathways and provide institutions with data to evaluate their effectiveness.

**E. Reverse Transfer**

Reverse transfer allows students who leave a technical college before completing an associate degree to apply eligible credits earned at a four-year institution toward that unfinished credential.

CCU is participating in the National Student Clearinghouse's reverse transfer process to make this opportunity more accessible.

**Process:**

1. Eligible transfer students receive information about reverse transfer early in the semester.
2. Students must actively opt in to participate.
3. Participating students' academic records are shared with their former technical college at the end of each semester.
4. The technical college evaluates the coursework to determine whether the student has completed the requirements for an associate degree.

**Reported Results:**

- Seven associate degrees were awarded during the first implementation period.
- Some participating students were able to satisfy additional general education requirements.
- The presenter reported that reverse transfer can eliminate approximately two to three remaining general education courses for some students.

**Challenges Identified:**

- Students may not understand reverse transfer or its benefits.
- Participation requires students to opt in.
- Institutions need stronger communication strategies to increase participation.

**Key Takeaway:** Reverse transfer can help students earn an additional credential, reduce unnecessary coursework, and save time and money.

**F. Transfer Explorer**

Coastal Carolina University participated as a pilot institution for Transfer Explorer, a tool designed to improve transparency in transfer credit evaluation.

Transfer Explorer allows students to:

- View how courses transfer between institutions.
- Determine how credits apply toward specific degree programs.
- Compare multiple academic pathways.
- Identify general education requirements satisfied through Course-to-Core tokens.
- Share transfer evaluations with advisors and institutions.
- Explore courses that may support reverse transfer.

The presenter explained that CCU's transfer equivalency information is updated regularly, with changes reflected in Transfer Explorer through weekly updates.

**Key Takeaway:** Transfer Explorer provides students with clearer information before they enroll in courses, helping them make informed academic decisions.

**G. Coastal Bound Program Expansion**

Coastal Bound is an early-engagement initiative designed to connect prospective transfer students with Coastal Carolina University before they complete their studies at a technical college.

The program originally operated through a partnership with Horry-Georgetown Technical College.

CCU is now working to expand Coastal Bound statewide across South Carolina's technical colleges.

**Program Benefits:**

- Early access to pre-transfer academic advising.
- Information about degree requirements and transfer pathways.
- Guidance on selecting courses that will apply toward a CCU degree.
- Introduction to Transfer Explorer.
- Opportunities for early engagement with university faculty and staff.
- Communication about transfer agreements and reverse transfer opportunities.

The presenter shared an example of a prospective biology transfer student who received advising that helped her select a chemistry course better aligned with CCU's degree requirements.

Coastal Bound participation does not require students to commit to attending Coastal Carolina University.

Dual enrollment students may also participate and receive early transfer guidance.

**Key Takeaway:** Early advising and communication can prevent students from taking unnecessary courses and help them make better-informed transfer decisions.

**3. Audience Questions and Responses**

**Question 1: How does Transfer Explorer receive updated course information?**

The presenter explained that Transfer Explorer connects with CCU's transfer equivalency management system. When course equivalencies are updated, the changes are reflected in Transfer Explorer through its regular update process.

**Question 2: Do students receive both transfer credit and a Course-to-Core token?**

Yes. Students retain the original credit hours awarded for the transferred course. The zero-credit token is an additional designation indicating that the course satisfies a specific general education requirement.

**Question 3: Does joining Coastal Bound commit a student to attending CCU?**

No. Coastal Bound provides early advising and engagement opportunities without requiring students to enroll at CCU.

**Question 4: Are military credit mobility initiatives being implemented statewide?**

The presenter noted that statewide work is underway through the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education and its credit mobility efforts. However, individual institutions maintain responsibility for evaluating military credits according to their academic requirements.

**Question 5: Have other four-year institutions adopted similar credit mobility practices?**

The presenter indicated that CCU has shared aspects of its work with other institutions and advisory groups. Because several initiatives were implemented recently, broader discussions and opportunities for collaboration are still developing.

**Question 6: What impact have these initiatives had on retention and graduation rates?**

The presenter explained that it is too early to determine long-term retention and graduation outcomes because many initiatives have been implemented for approximately one year.

However, CCU has begun collecting data on credits applied toward general education requirements and students participating in transfer pathways.

**Question 7: How can institutions encourage students to participate in reverse transfer?**

The presenter emphasized communicating the practical benefits, particularly the opportunity to earn an associate degree while reducing remaining coursework, tuition expenses, and time to completion.

Increasing awareness and improving opt-in participation remain priorities.

**Question 8: Are there formal dual enrollment agreements connected to Coastal Bound?**

The presenter stated that no specific formal dual enrollment agreements were currently in place through the initiative. However, dual enrollment students can participate in Coastal Bound and receive early transfer guidance.

**Question 9: How was the committee responsible for reviewing transfer courses established?**

CCU used its existing Core Curriculum Committee rather than creating a new committee.

The committee meets monthly and already reviews general education matters, petitions, and substitutions.

This existing structure made it possible to expand course evaluations without creating an entirely new administrative process.

**Question 10: How many students have completed reverse transfer?**

The presenter confirmed that seven associate degrees had been awarded during the initial implementation period but did not provide the total number of students who had participated or completed the process.

**4. Major Themes and Lessons Learned**

Several important themes emerged throughout the presentation.

**Credit Applicability Matters More Than Credit Acceptance**

Institutions should evaluate whether transferred credits fulfill degree requirements rather than simply counting toward total earned hours.

**Faculty Collaboration Is Essential**

Successful credit mobility initiatives require faculty participation, clearly documented learning outcomes, and evidence supporting course equivalencies.

**Transparency Supports Student Success**

Students need accessible information explaining how their credits transfer and how those credits apply toward their intended degree programs.

**Early Advising Prevents Credit Loss**

Providing academic guidance before students transfer can reduce unnecessary coursework and improve degree planning.

**Data Should Inform Transfer Agreements**

Institutions should regularly review transfer agreements and track student outcomes to identify successful pathways and areas requiring improvement.

**Recognition of Prior Learning Reduces Barriers**

Military training, previously completed coursework, and other demonstrated learning should be evaluated to ensure students receive appropriate academic recognition.

**5. Next Steps Identified**

Coastal Carolina University outlined several priorities for continued improvement:

1. **Expand Coastal Bound statewide:** Continue developing partnerships with South Carolina technical colleges to increase early student engagement.
2. **Conduct annual articulation agreement reviews:** Evaluate curriculum alignment and identify opportunities to improve existing transfer pathways.
3. **Develop additional program-specific agreements:** Expand AA, AS, and AAS transfer opportunities that support degree completion.
4. **Increase faculty engagement:** Continue collaborating with academic departments and curriculum committees to evaluate transfer and military credits.
5. **Expand credit mobility initiatives:** Explore additional opportunities to recognize military education and prior learning.
6. **Improve reverse transfer participation:** Strengthen communication and student awareness to increase opt-in rates.
7. **Monitor student outcomes:** Use transfer articulation agreement data to track credit applicability, academic progress, retention, and graduation outcomes.
8. **Increase awareness of Transfer Explorer:** Encourage students, advisors, and institutional partners to use the platform for transfer planning.

**6. Implications for South Carolina Institutions**

The initiatives presented offer several potential opportunities for other institutions across South Carolina.

Institutions may benefit from reviewing the state's 86 universally transferable courses to determine whether credits are fulfilling meaningful degree requirements.

Existing curriculum committees could be used to evaluate courses that currently transfer only as electives.

Greater collaboration between technical colleges and four-year universities could also improve program alignment and reduce unnecessary coursework.

Expanding the use of transparent transfer tools, strengthening reverse transfer communication, and providing earlier academic advising may help students navigate transfer pathways more successfully.

The presentation demonstrated the importance of moving beyond traditional course equivalencies toward a more comprehensive approach to credit mobility.

**7. Overall Session Summary**

The session highlighted Coastal Carolina University's efforts to improve transfer student success through credit mobility, academic partnerships, and increased transparency.

The Course-to-Core Project, military credit evaluations, associate degree pathways, reverse transfer, Transfer Explorer, and Coastal Bound initiatives represent complementary strategies for reducing barriers to degree completion.

While long-term student success data are still being collected, the university has already documented improvements in the application of transfer credits toward general education requirements and the recognition of military learning.

The presentation reinforced that successful transfer systems require collaboration among faculty, advisors, registrars, administrators, and institutional partners.

**8. Final Takeaway**

**The ultimate goal of transfer credit mobility is to ensure that students receive meaningful recognition for the learning they have already completed.**

By improving credit applicability, strengthening institutional partnerships, and providing students with clear transfer information earlier in their academic journeys, colleges and universities can help reduce unnecessary coursework, lower educational costs, and support timely degree completion.

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**Notetaker's Note:** This report was prepared from the provided presentation transcript. The transcript contains some transcription errors and minor inconsistencies in reported figures. Numerical results have been presented as stated during the session and should be verified against the presenter's official materials before external publication.