

**REVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE ARTICULATION AGREEMENT THAT EXISTS  
BETWEEN CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS OF  
THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM  
AND CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM**

A Report to

The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee,  
The Senate Appropriations Committee on Education/Higher Education, and  
The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education

Submitted by

The State Board of Community Colleges and  
The Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina

November 1, 2019

As Required by

Session Law 2013-72 (HB 903)

**ANNUAL REPORT ON THE COMPREHENSIVE ARTICULATION AGREEMENT TO  
THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE****NOVEMBER 1, 2019**

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S.L. 2013-72 (HB 903) North Carolina General Statute 116-11(10c) requires The University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Community College System to conduct biannual joint reviews of the *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement* to ensure that the agreement is fair, current, and relevant for all students and institutions and to report their findings to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, including all revisions to the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement and reports of noncompliance by November 1 of each year. The statute also requires the University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Community College System jointly to develop an articulation agreement advising tool for students, parents, and faculty to simplify the course transfer and admissions process.

**SUMMARY**

The revised *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA)* was signed by the UNC Board of Governors and the State Board of Community Colleges on February 21, 2014. The CAA was implemented in Fall Semester 2014. To date, the Transfer Advisory Committee (TAC) has completed one full round of compliance visits and is two-thirds of the way through a second round. There have been no reports of noncompliance by any institution.

The University of North Carolina System (UNC System) and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) continue to work to enhance educational opportunities for NCCCS students by improving transfer administration, utilizing data to assess transfer effectiveness, and facilitating communication between respective constituent institutions. The UNC Transfer Student Success Website, the College Foundation of North Carolina, and published Baccalaureate Degree Plans provide access to details students need to make informed choices when selecting institutions, degree programs, and courses. An online data dashboard containing transfer information for each community college and senior institution, as well as aggregate information for the two systems, improves transparency and accountability by providing public access to transfer and performance data. Both systems continue to work together to develop and support degree-mapping tools to facilitate informed and efficient transfer.

This report summarizes ongoing efforts to implement and fulfill the CAA. The TAC is committed to providing students and institutions with information and strategies to support associate degree and baccalaureate degree completion.

The most recent version of the 2014 CAA, complete with appendices, is available at <https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/academic-programs/college-transferarticulation-agreements/comprehensive-articulation-agreement-caa> or [https://www.northcarolina.edu/sites/default/files/2018\\_caa.pdf](https://www.northcarolina.edu/sites/default/files/2018_caa.pdf)

## CAA PROGRESS - 2019

### **Transfer Enrollment and Performance Data**

The UNC Data Dashboard provides essential data on transfer students to include enrollment trends, credit hours and degree transfers, graduation rates, grade point average, and performance in disciplines after transfer. Within the dashboard, data for individual community colleges and universities are available for deeper analysis. The Data Dashboard continues to be a vital resource in determining whether the 2014 CAA is having the desired impact on transfer student success and whether the changes in policy and practice put in place because of the CAA and the associated compliance site visits are achieving the desired positive outcomes. This information is critical to the decision-making process for both individual community colleges and universities, as well as for the two systems. Students who entered the NCCCS in fall 2014 are under the protections of the 2014 CAA, and an increasing number have transferred to the UNC System as of fall 2018. The increasing number of transfer students who fall under the protections of the 2014 CAA and their successful transfer to senior institutions give a clear indication of the value of the 2014 CAA to students.

### **Transfer Student Enrollment**

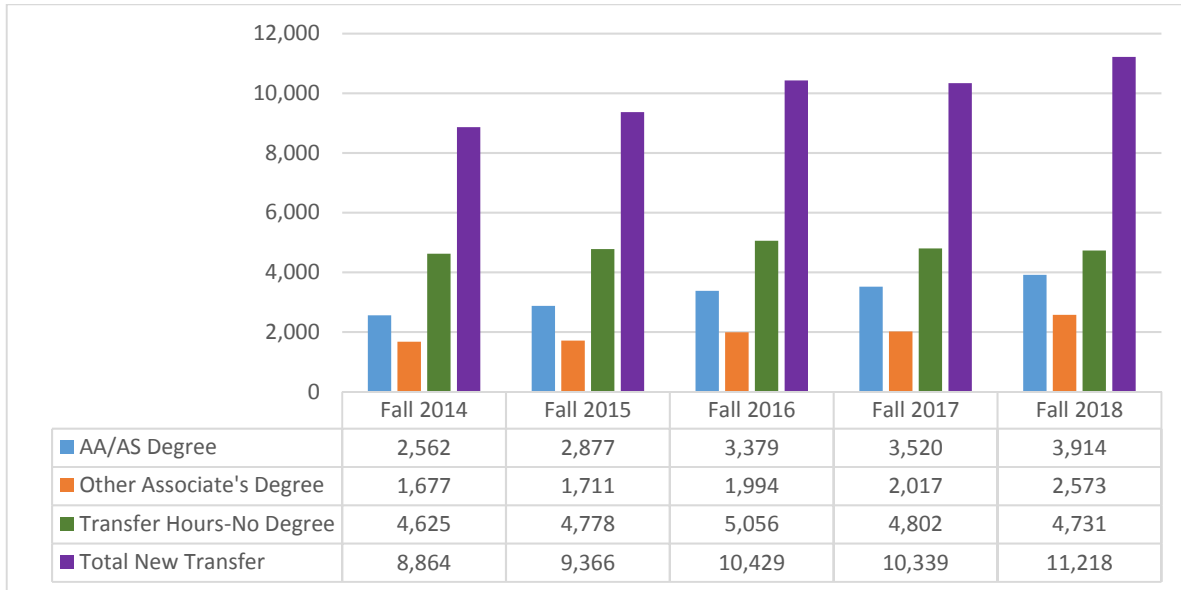
There continues to be a steady increase in the enrollment of NCCCS transfer students into UNC System institutions. This increase is a clear result of the revised CAA, proper advising, and the strong collaboration between the UNC System and NCCCS. Data from fall 2017 and fall 2018 indicate increases in associate degree completion and in overall transfer enrollment. Since the majority of community college students do not complete their associate degrees in two years, the TAC anticipates an increasing trend in associate degree completion prior to transfer and in overall transfer enrollment. Students, advisors, and institutions continue to gain a better understanding of the protections of the CAA and the wide-ranging benefits of degree completion.

In fall 2017, data illustrate the continued increase in the number of NCCCS students transferring to the UNC System, rising from 10,339 in fall 2017 to 11,218 in fall 2018. This represents an increase of 879 students (see Table 1). The trend in the number of NCCCS students transferring with a completed associate degree continues to rise as well (see Table 2). In fall 2017, the total number of NCCCS students transferring with a completed degree (AA/AS or other associate degree) was 5,537 compared to 6,487 students in fall 2018. The change from fall 2017 to fall 2018 in the number of NCCCS students transferring with an associate degree represents an increase of 950 students, the largest one-year increase witnessed to date (see Table 2).

Conversely, the number of NCCCS students who transfer to UNC System institutions with transfer credits but no degree has declined since the implementation of the revised CAA. In fall 2016, 5,056 NCCCS students transferred before completing an associate degree compared to 4,802 non-degree-earning students in fall 2017 and 4,731 such students in fall 2018 (see Table 1). From fall 2016 to fall 2018, the overall decrease in the number of students transferring with credits but without a degree totals 325 students. This decrease supports the sustained emphasis on degree completion at the community college level prior to transfer to a senior institution. The increase in overall transfer numbers and the increase in degree completers prior to transfer illustrate the continued positive impact of the 2014 CAA on transfer student success in North Carolina.

Table 1

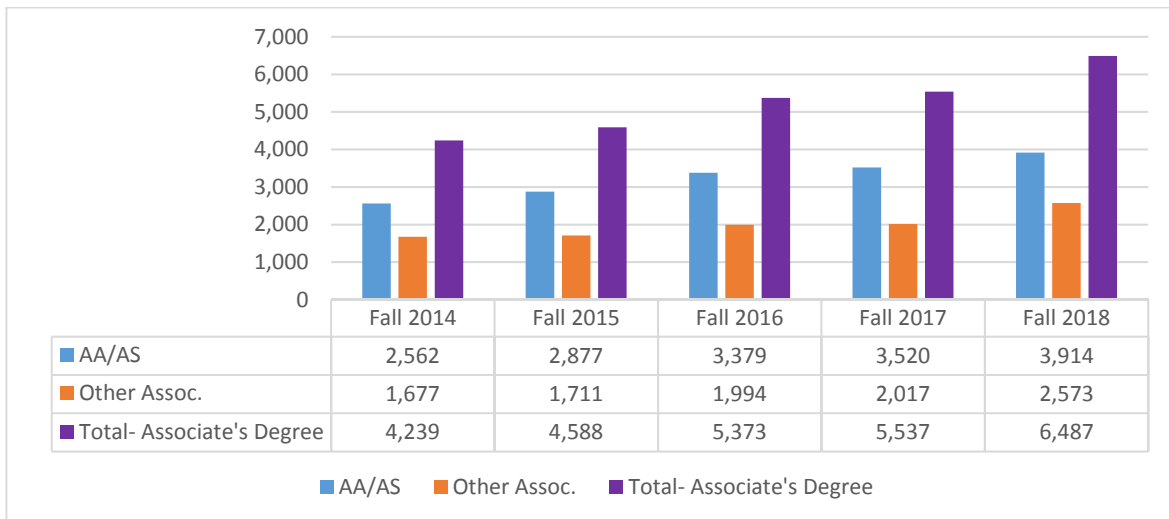
*New NCCCS Student Enrollment to UNC*



*Note: Data within Table 1 include the most current information from the Student Data Mart and may differ slightly from previously reported information.*

Table 2

*NCCCS Student Transfers with Completed Associate Degree*



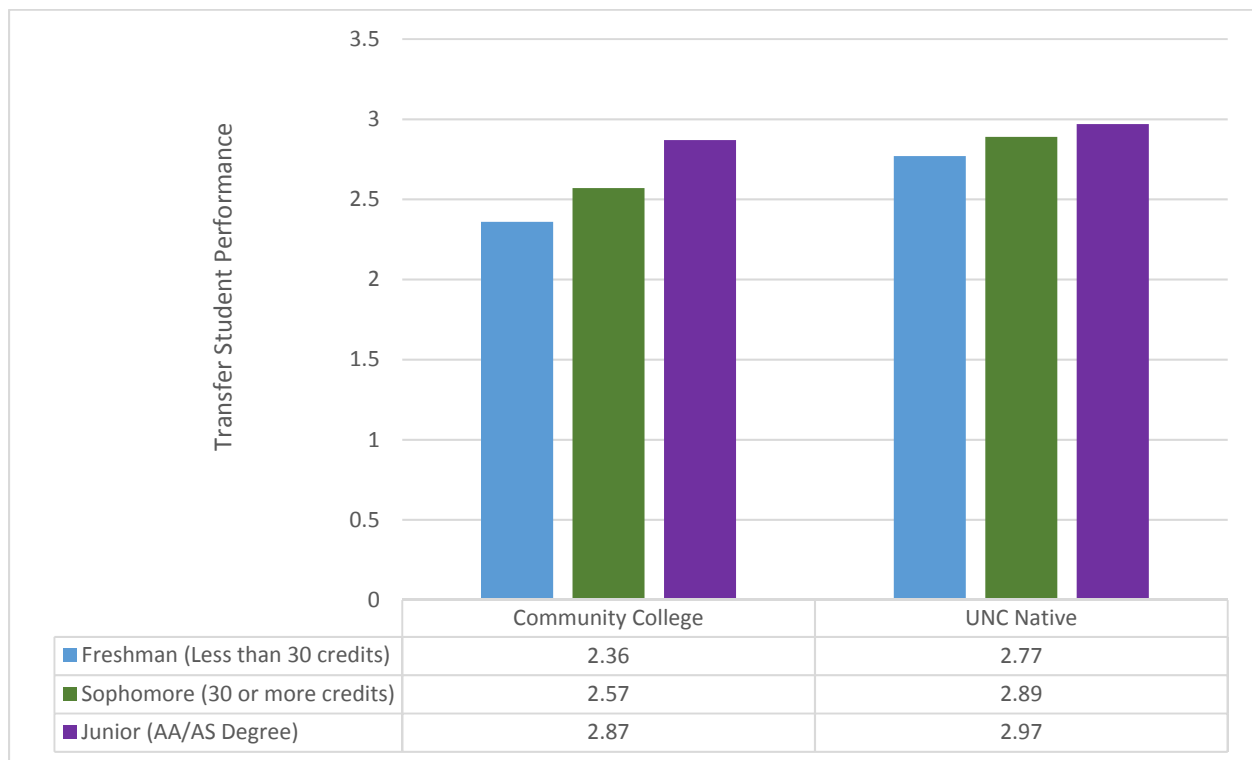
*Note: Data within Table 2 include the most current information from the Student Data Mart and may differ slightly from previously reported information.*

## Transfer Performance Data

The most recent data on transfer student performance continue to indicate a strong correlation between degree and credit-hour completion prior to transfer and academic performance at the senior institution (see Table 3). Students who transfer from an NCCCS institution into a UNC System institution with fewer than 30 completed credit hours significantly lag behind those who started at senior institutions as freshmen in first-year performance. This is also true of students who transfer before completing an associate degree but have more than 30 credit hours of transferable coursework. The overall first-year student GPA of non-degree-earning transfer students with more than 30 completed hours is lower compared to their sophomore UNC System native counterparts. Students who complete the associate degree prior to transfer and matriculate as juniors perform comparably with UNC System native juniors. These results confirm the foundational principle of the CAA that transfer students who complete the associate degree prior to transfer will perform as well as students who began their college careers at UNC System institutions.

Table 3

### 2018 Transfer Student Performance Grade Point Average – First Year



Note: Data indicated are reflective of first-year performance for students entering in fall 2018 through spring 2019.

### Campus Compliance Site Visits

In January 2016, the Transfer Advisory Committee (TAC) established a process for reviewing the institutional transfer credit policies and procedures of UNC System institutions once every two years to ensure compliance with the CAA. The TAC completed its first round of reviews for 15 UNC System institutions in November 2017. (The North Carolina School of the Arts was not included in the compliance visits because of few transfers.). The second round of reviews began in October 2018 and will be completed by December 2019.

Institution	First-round Visit	Outcome	Second-round Visit	Outcome
Appalachian State University	July 25, 2016	Compliance	October 18, 2018	Compliance
East Carolina University	September 15, 2016	Compliance	October 11, 2018	Compliance
Elizabeth City State University	September 16, 2016	Compliance	October 12, 2018	Compliance
Fayetteville State University	October 18, 2017	Compliance	*Fall 2019 TBD	
North Carolina A&T University	March 29, 2017	Compliance	April 30, 2019	Compliance
North Carolina Central University	November 17, 2016	Compliance	November 28, 2018	Compliance
North Carolina State University	November 16, 2016	Compliance	November 7, 2018	Compliance
UNC Asheville	April 17, 2017	Compliance	April 17, 2019	Compliance
UNC-Chapel Hill	April 5, 2017	Compliance	May 1, 2019	Compliance
UNC Charlotte	April 13, 2016	Compliance	October 16, 2018	Compliance
UNC Greensboro	April 14, 2016	Compliance	October 18, 2018	Compliance
UNC Pembroke	October 18, 2017	Compliance	*Fall 2019 TBD	
UNC Wilmington	October 20, 2017	Compliance	*Fall 2019 TBD	
Western Carolina University	April 19, 2017	Compliance	March 28, 2019	Compliance
Winston-Salem State University	June 23, 2016	Compliance	November 16, 2018	Compliance

### TAC/CAA Campus Site Visit Process and Compliance Feedback Reports

The UNC System sent a CAA Review Form to each of the institutions at least one month prior to the scheduled site visit. The TAC continues to refine this form to make it useful to both the institution under review and the TAC site visit team. Each institution returned the form within two weeks of receiving it. A site visit team consisting of one TAC representative from the NCCCS and one from the UNC System reviewed the forms along with other information from the Data Dashboard and the institution's website to assess transfer student admissions and performance data, completion rates, transfer credits accepted, total credits accumulated upon baccalaureate completion, most popular transfer student majors, top feeder community colleges, currency of Baccalaureate Degree Plans (BDPs), and institutional practices. The TAC interviewed key

transfer personnel at the UNC System institution and met with NCCCS transfer students to hear about their transition experience. The TAC also conducted an open forum for all campus personnel.

Upon completion of the compliance visits, the site teams submitted feedback reports to the entire TAC for review and approval. The UNC System sent approved reports to each university provost for distribution to appropriate personnel. This year, one site visit resulted in a provisional finding of non-compliance with BDP maintenance; however, upon notification, the institution rectified the situation promptly and was subsequently found to be in compliance. To date, all UNC System institutions have been found in compliance with the CAA. TAC members noted that, in this second round of site visits, UNC System institutions had a much greater working knowledge of the CAA and have implemented a number of practices to form stronger partnerships with their community college partners. For example, several UNC System institutions have developed co-admission or provisional admission programs that allow senior institution advisors the opportunity to work more closely with prospective transfers to ensure they are taking the best courses for transfer into specific majors. Several community colleges are offering dedicated space for UNC System advisors to visit and work with students to be sure they are on a seamless path to transfer.

### **Funding for TAC**

Since its inception, the TAC has relied upon the home institutions of its members to fund member participation in TAC meetings, compliance site visits, and presentations at system conferences or workshops. The TAC is intentionally comprised of members from across the state from urban and rural areas and representing large and small institutions. The travel costs associated with the duties and responsibilities of membership place an additional financial obligation on institutions that have constraints and limitations on spending. NCCCS and the UNC System have proposed funding to support TAC meetings and member participation.

### **Transfer Credit Appeal Procedure**

Students who believe the terms of the CAA have not been followed by senior institutions to which they are admitted may appeal by following the Transfer Credit Appeal provision in Appendix E of the CAA. Student awareness and use of the Appeal Procedure remain limited, with no formal appeals having been filed. When faculty and staff advisors at NCCCS institutions have conveyed concerns about CAA adherence to the TAC, the issues have been resolved through conversations between TAC members and UNC System personnel. This process has worked well for situations of which college and university personnel have been made aware and given the opportunity to make satisfactory resolutions or explanations. Potential situations that could have resulted in an appeal to the TAC have thus far been resolved at the institution level, which is the intent of the appeal process. Since 2018, the TAC has promoted greater awareness of the Transfer Credit Appeal provision among transfer students by recommending it be a required topic in ACA 122 (College Transfer Success) courses taken at NCCCS colleges.

### **Baccalaureate Degree Plans**

The 2014 CAA requires senior institutions to develop and maintain Baccalaureate Degree Plans (BDPs) to outline community college and university courses that lead to timely baccalaureate degree completion for each major the institution offers. Compliance site visits in 2018-2019 revealed that more institutions have centralized the responsibility for BDP maintenance.

Institutions with centralized processes have more consistent and accurate BDPs and are able to respond to course and program updates in a more timely manner. The TAC continues to share best practices for BDP maintenance with UNC System institutions during site visits.

### **CAA Revisions**

The TAC reviewed the latest approved version of the CAA in May 2019 and proposed minor changes for editorial clarity and updates to titles and phrasing that had changed since the prior review. In addition, two courses were added to the Universal General Education Transfer Component list after having been approved through the established procedure: COM 120 (Interpersonal Communications) and DRA 111 (Theater Appreciation). Other new and revised courses in the NCCCS Combined Course Library were added to the lists of General Education courses and Pre-major/Elective courses to reflect curriculum improvements and revisions completed by both systems over the course of the year. All changes to the CAA were presented to appropriate personnel in both systems, with the expectation that BDPs will continue to be updated to reflect these changes in the next academic term. The latest version of the CAA has been presented to both the State Board of Community Colleges and the UNC Board of Governors.

### **UNC System Director of Community College Partnerships**

After a period of turnover in the UNC Director of Community College Partnerships position (established in 2017), the TAC welcomed a new director in March 2019. The new director's professional experiences with transfer at both senior institutions and community colleges contribute to a strong understanding of institutional practices and capacity, as well as transfer student needs. The expertise of the new director has resulted in effective and expeditious resolution of CAA questions and concerns. In the past six months, the new director has forged greater communication between the TAC and information technologists and data analysts at the UNC System to assist in improving the Data Dashboard, creating transfer equivalency tools for more consistent credit evaluation, and collecting advising resources in an electronic *Transfer Toolbox* (see "Communication" below). The director role has been and will continue to be critical for effective implementation of the CAA.

### **Statewide Advising Committee**

In its 2018 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the TAC recommended that North Carolina community colleges conduct a survey of advising practices with the goal of identifying best practices to share across the state. As a result, in 2018-2019, a statewide Advising Association has emerged to engage advisors from both systems in public forums and work groups to share best practices and provide technical assistance to institutions as they work to improve advising for transfer students. The association is housed under the NC Student Success Center.

### **Communication**

The dissemination of transfer information to appropriate personnel in a timely manner can create challenges for both NCCCS colleges and UNC System institutions. Up-to-date adjustments to the CAA as approved by the TAC, advising information, and a clearinghouse of best practices are invaluable resources to transfer advisors and administrators. In addition, the TAC strives for transparency and public accessibility in its work. To these ends, two platforms



for enhanced communication among constituents will be launched in fall 2019 to promote a smoother flow of information across both the NCCC and UNC systems, as well as to the public at large. A *Transfer Toolbox – Advisor Resource* website will house information about policy changes, CAA updates, advising tools, best practices, and opportunities for connections (e.g., transfer conferences) such that advisors can obtain needed information in one location. The *Transfer Advisory Committee* (TAC) website will provide the public with details regarding membership, meetings, and current policy. At present, information about the work of the TAC is split between websites for the NCCCS and the UNC System. The new TAC website will provide a structure for ongoing and archived interactions of this committee.

In addition, a monthly series of *Transfer Talk* webinars to promote enhanced communication and collaboration for successful student transitions has been launched for transfer-related personnel at each UNC System institution, including transfer advisors, admissions staff, and administrators. These webinars will continue throughout the 2019-2020 academic year, with monthly updates extended to transfer advisors and college transfer personnel/administrators in the community college system beginning in fall 2019. Participants will discuss relevant information about the CAA and the work of the TAC, and group facilitators will collect concerns from individuals who work most directly with transfer students in both systems to share with TAC members so they are aware of challenges that exist in the field.

### **Conclusion and TAC Recommendations**

In the past five years, NC community colleges and UNC System institutions have made steady progress toward seamless transfer. They continue to perfect and improve their partnerships to provide more effective advising, clear and consistent communication, and ongoing support to transfer students. As awareness and execution of the 2014 *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement* increase in North Carolina, more students are completing associate degrees at community colleges and transferring to UNC System institutions. Upon transfer, these degree-completers are performing comparably with students who started as freshmen at those senior institutions. The data provided in this report demonstrate that UNC System institutions are not only meeting the expectations set out in the CAA, but they are finding creative ways to enhance the transfer process and to champion transfer student success. In light of this positive momentum, the TAC recommends ongoing support of the following efforts:

- Co-admission initiatives and UNC System advisor residency on community college campuses to guide students toward completion of appropriate courses, programs, and institutions earlier in the transfer process;
- Technological solutions that create greater continuity, clarity, accessibility, and transparency for advising transfer students and informing course, program, and institution selection;
- Further research on transfer trends and issues, e.g., break out the “other associate degrees” with which students transfer to senior institutions, explore equity in transfer, and determine relationship between various advising initiatives (ACA 122, co-admission, faculty vs. professional advisors) and transfer success; and

- CAA education and awareness-building through TAC forums on campuses, webinars, and presentations at conferences/workshops to share and promote best practices observed through statewide compliance site visits and funding for TAC member participation in these efforts.