

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

A Report to the:

Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, 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, 2017

As Required by

Session Law 2013-72 (HB 903)

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA & THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
COMPREHENSIVE ARTICULATION AGREEMENT REPORT TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

NOVEMBER 1, 2017

S.L. 2013-72 (HB 903) North Carolina General Statute 116-11(10c) requires The University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System to conduct biannual joint reviews of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) 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 and the North Carolina Community College System to jointly 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 for the Fall Semester of 2014. To date, there have been no reports of noncompliance by any institution.

The UNC System (UNC) and the NC Community College System (NCCCS) continue to work to enhance educational opportunities for NCCCS students by improving transfer administration via electronic tools and up-to-date course and degree information. The UNC Transfer Student Success Website, the Transfer Navigator, and published Baccalaureate Degree Plans provide students with access to current information that permits them to make the best choice possible in selecting institutions and degree programs. To be sure, additional resources will be needed to support and continue to develop various online degree mapping tools.

This report provides an update on efforts to fully implement the CAA through addressing the current needs of NCCCS students and the growth of UNC academic programs. The Transfer Advisory Committee (TAC) is committed to providing students with the pathway that will best benefit their earning a baccalaureate degree.

The most recent version of the 2014 CAA (revised August 2016), complete with appendices, is available at <http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/academic-programs-college-transferarticulation-agreements>

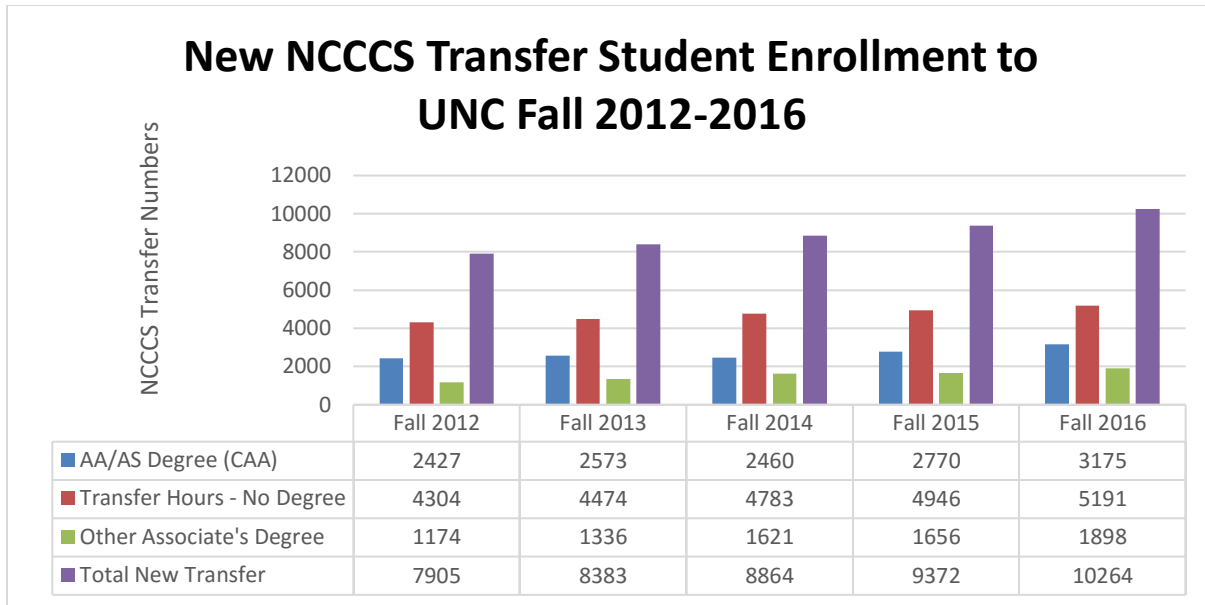
CAA PROGRESS, 2017

Transfer Enrollment and Performance Data

The UNC Data Dashboard provides crucial data on transfer student enrollment trends, credit hours and degree transfers, graduation rates, grade point average, performance in disciplines after transfer, and more. All this data is broken down by community college and university. This source is vital to determining whether or not the 2014 CAA is having an impact on transfer student success and whether or not the changes in policy and practice put in place as a result of the CAA and the CAA 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 and for the two systems. Students who entered the community college system in Fall Semester 2014 are under the protections of the 2014 CAA and a good number have transferred to the university system for Fall Semester 2016. That data gives us the first indication of the value of the 2014 CAA to students.

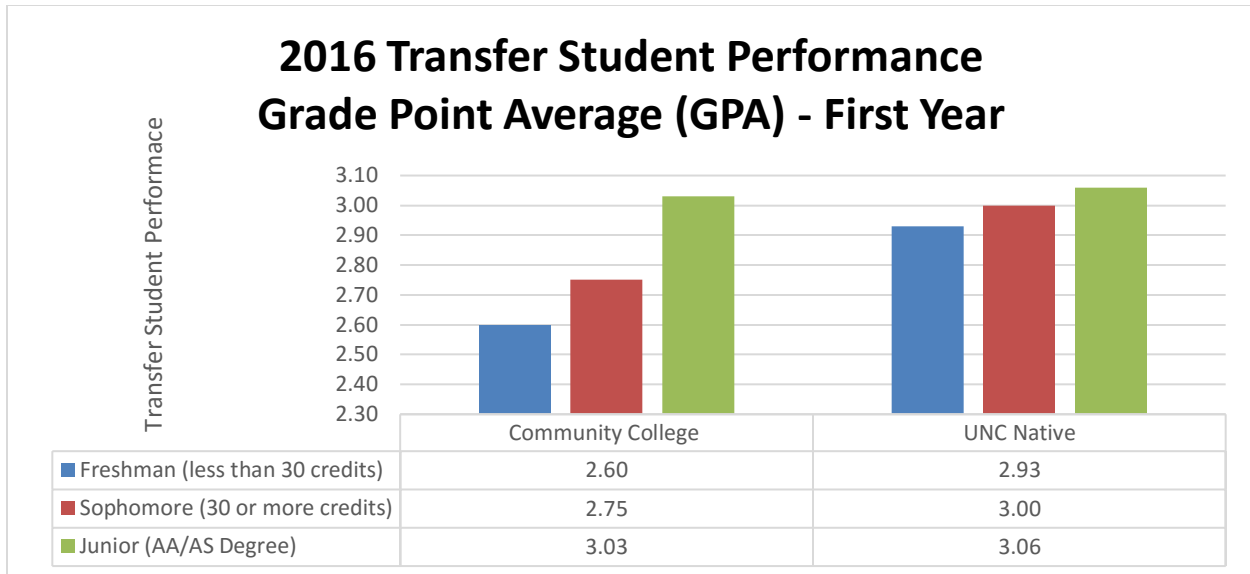
Transfer Student Enrollment

There has been a steady increase in the enrollment of NCCCS transfer students into UNC institutions. The increase is a clear result of the revised CAA, proper advising, and the strong collaboration between UNC and NCCCS. Although the CAA encourages NCCCS students to earn the associate degree before transfer, many students are choosing to do otherwise. However, since the majority of community college students do not complete in two years, we anticipate an increasing trend toward associate degree completion prior to transfer as the students gain a better understanding of the protections of the CAA through ACA 122 and as both NCCCS and UNC System encourage and incentivize degree completion. We did see a substantial increase in the number of NCCC students transferring to the UNC system, from 9,372 in 2015 to 10,264 in 2016, a nearly 900 student increase, the largest one- year increase we have witnessed. Furthermore, we also see a significant increase in the number of associate degree completers transferring, over 400, from 2,770 in 2015 to 3,175 in 2016. From 2015 to 2016, we also see a significant increase in the number of Associate in Applied Science (AAS) completers transferring to UNC institutions. This increase is attributable to the increasing number of bi-lateral agreements between institutions and confirms the positive and productive working relationships between individual community colleges and UNC institutions. The insertion of CAA-protected UGETC courses into the general education hours of AAS programs is also facilitating a smooth transition to the senior institutions. Although the number of students transferring credit hours without degrees increased, the rate of increase was far less than the rate of those transferring after degree completion. The increase in overall transfer numbers and the increase in degree completers prior to transfer indicate the positive impact of the 2014 CAA on transfer student success in North Carolina.



Transfer Performance Data

The data results for transfer student performance indicate a strong correlation between degree and credit hours completion prior to transfer and academic performance at the senior institution. Students who transfer from a North Carolina community college into a UNC institution with less than 30 credits significantly lag behind their native counterparts in first-year performance. Community college transfers who transfer with more than 30 credit hours but without associate degree completion are closer in performance with their sophomore UNC native counterparts but still trail in GPA attainment. Students who complete the associate degree prior to transfer and matriculate as juniors perform comparably with UNC native juniors. These results confirm the foundation 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 institutions.



Review of 2014 CAA

In January 2016, the Transfer Advisory Committee (TAC) established review teams and a process for reviewing the institutional transfer credit policies and procedures of two UNC institutions per quarter.

TAC/CAA Site Visit Process and Schedule

UNC-GA will send out the CAA Review Form to the scheduled institutions at least one month prior to the visit. The institution will return the form two weeks after receiving it. The appointed site team will connect with the institution's transfer point person to schedule the visit. The review form requests information concerning transfer policies and practices of the institution. The Form also requests transfer student admissions and performance data, including transfer student completion rates and accumulated credits to baccalaureate degree. Upon completion of the first round of site visits in the Fall Semester 2017, the TAC will revise the review form based on the initial site visits and data collection before the second round commences in the Spring 2018.

CAA Compliance and Feedback Report

Upon completion of the site visit, the site team will submit the Feedback Report to the entire TAC for review and approval no later than two weeks after site visit. Each Report will combine both narrative and data points and include information obtained from the CAA Review Form and the interviews conducted on the site visit. After review and approval, UNC-GA will send the report to the university provost with the expectation for campus distribution to appropriate personnel.

TAC CAA Site Visit Schedule (2017)

January-March 2017	North Carolina A&T University UNC Chapel Hill
April –June 2017	UNC Asheville Western Carolina University
July –September 2017	UNC Wilmington
October-December 2017	Fayetteville State University UNC Pembroke

Completed Site Visits (as of September 1, 2017)

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Winston-Salem State University, Appalachian State University, East Carolina University, Elizabeth City State University, North Carolina State University at Raleigh, North Carolina Central University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Western Carolina University, and University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Site visits scheduled for the Fall Semester 2017 include University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Fayetteville State University, and University of North Carolina at Pembroke. Following those visits, the first round of site visits will be complete, and the second round will commence during Spring Semester 2018.

To date, all reviewed institutions are in compliance with the CAA. TAC members have found the completed site visits positive and informative. Though seamless transfer challenges still exist, the universities in collaboration with their community college partners are making concerted efforts to improve the transfer process and to enhance transfer student support and performance. The completed site visits have illuminated both the existing challenges to transfer student success and the best practices institutions have implemented to assist transfer students in achieving their academic and professional goals.

TAC Visits to UNC Campuses to Discuss Mathematics Issues

During the Spring 2017 semester, NCCCS and UNC-GA collaborated to provide information to each UNC affiliate institution on the content, structure, and rigor of the recently redesigned NCCCS mathematics curriculum, particularly as it relates to the UGETC courses in the NCCCS Associate of Arts transfer degree program. Philip Cauley, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Enrollment at Western Carolina University, and Jonathan Loss, Mathematics Department Head at Catawba Valley Community College, were selected for this mission. The university response was overwhelmingly positive. Many university representatives expressed their appreciation for this information and remarked how it gave them a much better grasp on the NCCCS UGETC mathematics courses. Several universities indicated that they would be reevaluating their general education and Baccalaureate Degree Plan (BDP) requirements based upon this knowledge.

The UNC campus visits have already reaped several positive outcomes for NCCCS students including greater choice provided on many university BDP guides, new course-for-course equivalencies at some universities, and a greater understanding of MAT 143 at most universities. Some necessary changes will take more time as decisions must go through several committees for review and due process at certain universities; however, there are many good outcomes to anticipate. Continued discussion and impetus for positive changes related to NCCCS mathematics courses and their transfer to UNC institutions can occur through the many relationships that have been fostered during these initial university visits. One message that was made abundantly clear in the discussions during these visits is that the UNC institutions are very desirous of accepting NCCCS transfer students, and they are working to make the transfer process as seamless as possible. The partnership between the NCCCS and UNC-GA continues to be extremely important to both parties.

Baccalaureate Degree Plans (BDPs)

The Baccalaureate Degree Plan is a critical component of the transfer student process. The plans create a clear transfer pathway by identifying and outlining courses that will lead to timely baccalaureate degree completion. Unfortunately, BDP oversight and management continues to be problematic. The original deadline for all universities to complete and publish BDPs (major plans that outline both community college and university courses leading to degree completion) was December 11, 2015. During the site visits and by sampling, the TAC discovered that some universities had not posted BDPs for all majors. There are also issues with maintenance and updating of the plans. The TAC has added a BDP section to the Review Form and will make BDP review a priority during future campus visits. The TAC will also review the BDP template and determine whether a standardized template is advisable. During the site visit student interviews, the TAC discovered that BDP use by community college advisors is not consistent. The TAC will work with the NCCCS, the NC Student Success Center, and the individual community colleges on strengthening student academic advising and emphasizing BDP use for university transfer students. Tracking student BDP selection is also problematic since programs of study at the university change often. Senior institutions with the strongest BDP management are those that have centralized the process and oversight. The TAC recommends a central management structure at each university for oversight of the BDPs.

Reverse Transfer

The Reverse Transfer Program is a collaborative effort between North Carolina's Community Colleges and the University of North Carolina's 16 constituent institutions. Students who transfer to a North Carolina university from one of the 58 North Carolina community colleges are given the opportunity to combine the credits earned at the university with credit already earned at the community college to determine if the associate degree requirements have been met. Students who do not complete the baccalaureate degree will at least earn a marketable credential. In 2016, the TAC mandated that universities must publish their reverse transfer policy and whether or not transfer students will have met lower division general education requirements with associate degree completion through the Reverse Transfer Program. The TAC is currently addressing the tracking and reporting processes for Reverse Transfer students. The number of students awarded degrees through this program has steadily increased:

Spring/Fall 2014:	722
Spring/Fall 2015:	781
Spring 2016:	<u>497</u>
Total:	2000

Since 2014, 2000 transfer students have been awarded an Associate Degree from their home community college.

ACA 122/Advising Workshops

During the university site visits, the TAC members interviewed NCCC transfer students at each institution to get their insights into the transfer process and to see if the protections of the CAA were in place and in practice. Two of the recurring complaints from the students concerned inconsistencies with community college advising and the ineffectiveness of ACA 122. Accurate and intensive academic advising is critical to transfer student success. ACA 122 is a required course on all Baccalaureate Degree Plans and one of the most important courses students will take. Interviews with transfer students revealed a wide range of approaches to ACA 122 instruction. Considering these results, the TAC partnered with the NC Student Success Center to offer three regional workshops in June 2017 to address advising and ACA 122 issues and to share best practices. The objectives of the workshops included review of ACA 122 learning outcomes, identifying transfer student success gaps, and inventorying best practices in transfer advising. The TAC also distributed a survey to transfer personnel at the universities in order to identify challenges transfer students encounter at the universities. The survey results identified a number of gaps in preparing students for transfer success, including developing baccalaureate degree plans, understanding four year campus culture, exploring and clarifying career goals, and completing pre-requisite courses. Academic planning and career exploration were two areas repeatedly mentioned, and these are two areas where the community colleges can implement changes through ACA 122 and advising to better prepare students to transition successfully to the senior institution. The TAC will continue to work with the NC Student Success Center and develop recommendations to improve both ACA 122 instruction and academic advising at the community colleges.

Transfer Credit Evaluation Audit

The site visit interviews with transfer students have provided valuable insights into the student experience before, during, and after transfer. However, these interviews do not provide an objective significant sampling of the transfer credit protections guaranteed by the CAA. To determine if these protections are operating as intended, the TAC has developed a Transfer Credit Evaluation Audit universities will run to provide a more comprehensive view of the transfer credit process and to see if students are being awarded the credits they have earned while North Carolina Community College System (NCCC) students. The student sample will focus on students who started at a community college in Fall Semester 2014 or later and enrolled at a UNC institution in Fall Semester 2017 after completing the AA/AS degree. Universities will report on credit evaluations for up to 60 students. The report will include the number of students in the sample with less than or equal to 49%, 50%-74%, 75%-99%, and 100% of total transfer hours counting toward the baccalaureate degree major to which they applied. The report will also predict the number of students in the sample capable of finishing the baccalaureate degree in two years. Student

level data will include the NCCCS institution most recently attended and any other NCCCS institution, credit for ACA 122, BDP major, enrolled major, total transfer hours, and percent of transfer hours counting toward degree. These audit reports will give us a clear picture of the impact of the CAA on transfer student credit accumulation and baccalaureate completion. The TAC will roll out the process to the universities through UNC-GA during Fall Semester 2017.

Transfer Credit Appeal Procedure

The Transfer Credit Appeal Procedure provision is in Appendix E of the CAA. This procedure is in place for a student who believes the terms and protections of the CAA have not been adhered to by a UNC institution to which the student has been admitted. The instructions for this process outline the steps a student needs to take to address the issue up to and including a TAC review of the situation. A timeline for the appeal process and the appeal form are included in the appendix. Student awareness and use of the Appeal Procedure has been limited. While a small number of student CAA issues have been brought to the TAC's attention, these issues have generally been informally resolved on the local level through conversations between TAC members and UNC institution personnel. Unfortunately, student interviews have revealed a general lack of awareness of the Appeal Procedure. Moving forward, the mandatory ACA 122 course on each BDP and the course's renewed emphasis on transfer issues and the CAA will help to inform students of the process. Transfer advisors at the community colleges are also being encouraged to make students aware of their CAA protections and the recourse of the Appeal Procedure.

UNC Director of Community College Partnerships

The UNC Director of Community College Partnerships will provide direction and oversight of all system level transfer initiatives. This individual will provide vision and leadership and perform the day-to-day activities related to transfer recruitment and admission policy, articulation and credit transfer policies (e.g., the CAA), partnership projects, and other related transfer initiatives. The position will co-staff, along with a North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) representative, several statewide transfer committees, including the TAC. The position will also be tasked with maintaining and improving the CAA with the primary goal to increase transfer student enrollment system-wide, minimize barriers to a four-year postsecondary education, and maximize student success. This position is key to keeping the lines of communication open between the NCCCS and UNC System, as well as between the TAC and UNC institution transfer personnel.

Communication

The dissemination of transfer information to appropriate personnel in a timely manner continues to be problematic, at both community colleges and UNC institutions. Adjustments by the TAC to the CAA are often not effectively communicated to transfer personnel and advisors working directly with students. To address this issue, the TAC is working with the NCCCS to develop a CAA-TAC web page that will contain CAA updates, meeting minutes, and other pertinent transfer information. The expected launch of the page is Fall Semester 2017. The TAC also intends to facilitate regional transfer information meetings beginning in Spring Semester 2018 to better communicate and interact with transfer personnel from both systems.

Conclusion

Through data reviews, CAA compliance site visits, and various workshops, the TAC has worked extremely hard this year overseeing the implementation of the CAA. Both systems are committed to making sure that the CAA is working in the best interests of our students and our state. The initial data results for students falling under the protections of the 2014 CAA are promising. These results clearly indicate that the transfer partnership between the North Carolina Community College System and the University of North Carolina System is progressing and producing desired outcomes and that the 2014 CAA is serving students well and leading the way to seamless and efficient transfer.

Best Practices for Transfer Student Success

- Require ACA 122 enrollment no later than second semester at the community college
- Emphasize individualized Baccalaureate Degree Plan development
- Centralize Baccalaureate Degree Plan management at the universities
- Incentivize Associate Degree completion prior to transfer
- Station university transfer Admissions personnel at community college campuses
- Impose mandatory senior institution transfer orientations, including online options, and campus tours
- Encourage faculty-to-faculty collaborations between UNC and NCCCS instructors, including ACA 122 instruction by UNC instructors on community college campuses
- Provide professional development for community college faculty and staff on career exploration, transfer student advisement, and academic planning
- Develop transfer student mentoring programs to introduce incoming transfers to campus activities and resources
- Design activities, organizations, and publications specifically designed for transfer students at both community colleges and universities

Existing Challenges

- Implement strategies to incentivize Associate Degree completion prior to transfer
- Educate students about the protections and guarantees of the CAA, including Transfer Credit Appeal Procedure
- Manage Baccalaureate Degree Plans more effectively and communicate any program changes to community college partners. Track student BDP selection
- Reduce the number of total credit hours (UNC and NCCCS) to Baccalaureate Degree completion
- Collect additional comparative data of UNC native students and NCCC transfer students
- Enhance communication between UNC and community college partners and between the TAC and campus transfer personnel
- Leverage existing and new technology to assist transfer students with credit articulation and degree completion