

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 620 (Senator Cassilly)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Higher Education – Articulation Agreements and Transfer Procedures –
Workgroup Study (Maryland Articulation and Transfer Act)

This bill establishes the Workgroup on Articulation Agreements and Transfer Procedures of Institutions of Higher Education to study obstacles encountered by students transferring between community colleges and four-year institutions of higher education. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) must staff the workgroup. By January 1, 2023, the workgroup must report its findings and recommendations. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2022, and terminates June 30, 2023.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MHEC can staff the workgroup and write the report using existing resources; however, resources may be redirected from existing priorities. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Local community college task force members can participate using existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The workgroup must:

- study the current system of articulation agreements and transfer procedures in the State to identify obstacles students encounter when transferring between community colleges and four-year institutions of higher education in the State; and

- make recommendations to remedy any identified obstacles to this type of student transfer, including proposing a timeline for implementation or adoption of the recommendations.

The workgroup consists of the Secretary of Higher Education or the Secretary's designee, specified members representing community colleges appointed by the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, and specified members representing four-year institutions of higher education appointed by the Maryland Independent College and University Association. From among its members, the workgroup must elect two co-chairs: one that represents a community college and one that represents a four-year institution of higher education.

A member of the workgroup may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under standard State travel regulations.

Current Law:

Statute – Transfer Requirements

MHEC must establish procedures for the transfer of students between *public* segments of postsecondary education. MHEC must recommend cooperative programs among segments of postsecondary education to assure appropriate flexibility in the higher education system. In conjunction with the governing boards of institutions, MHEC must establish standards for articulation agreements.

The procedures established must require a receiving institution that denies the transfer of a credit or course to an enrolled student to notify the transfer coordinator or institutional designee of the sending institution and the enrolled student about the denial within a time period that MHEC determines to be the latest possible time for the notification and specify the rationale for the denial. The transfer coordinator or institutional designee of the sending institution must conduct a review, in conjunction with the receiving institution's designee, within a time period MHEC determines to be appropriate. Each public institution of higher education must submit an annual report to MHEC listing any denials of transfer of a credit or a course and the reasons for the denials.

MHEC, in collaboration with the public institutions of higher education, was required to develop and implement, by July 1, 2016, a statewide transfer agreement whereby at least 60 credits of general education, elective, and major courses that a student earns at any community college in the State toward an associate of arts or associate of science degree must be transferable to any public four-year higher education institution in the State for credit toward a bachelor's degree.

In addition, MHEC, in collaboration with the public institutions of higher education, was required to develop and implement, by July 1, 2016, a statewide reverse transfer agreement whereby at least 30 credits that a student earns at any public four-year institution in the State toward a bachelor's degree are transferable to any community college in the State for credit toward an associate's degree.

Regulations – Transfer of Courses and Credits

The Code of Maryland Regulations establishes detailed transfer requirements that specify which types of credits and courses must transfer. In general, credit earned at any *public* institution in the State is transferable to any other *public* institution if (1) the credit is from a college or university parallel course or program; (2) grades in the block of courses transferred averaged 2.0 or higher; and (3) acceptance of the credit is consistent with the policies of the receiving institution governing native students following the same program. In addition, community college courses taken as part of a recommended transfer program degree must be applicable to related programs at the receiving public institution granting the degree if successfully completed in accordance with the receiving institution's policies governing native students in the same program.

In general, a completed general education program must transfer (as lower-division credits) without further review or approval by the receiving institution and without the need for a course-by-course match. The assignment of credit through a nationally recognized standardized exam such as the Advanced Placement (known as AP) exam must be determined according to the same standards that apply to native students in the receiving institution and consistent with the State minimum requirements. Other nontraditional credit, such as technical courses from career programs, must be evaluated on a course-by-course basis according to the same standards that apply to native students.

Regulations – Student Transfer Responsibilities

According to regulations, a student is held accountable for the loss of credits that (1) result from changes in the student's selection of the major program of study; (2) were earned for remedial course work; or (3) exceed the total course credits accepted in transfer. A student is also responsible for meeting all requirements of the academic program of the receiving institution.

Regulations – General Education Courses Transfer Mediation Committee

According to regulations, sending and receiving institutions that disagree on the transferability of general education courses must submit their disagreements to the Secretary of Higher Education, who must appoint a Transfer Mediation Committee to adjudicate the disagreement. Members appointed to the committee must be representative

of the public four-year colleges and universities and the community colleges. The committee must address general education issues at the course or curricular level, not individual student cases. As appropriate, the committee must consult with faculty on curricular issues. The findings of the committee are considered binding on both parties.

Regulations – Denial of Credit

According to regulations, the receiving institution must inform the student of the denial in writing no later than the middle of the student's first semester at the institution and must additionally inform the student of their right to appeal the decision. If the student exercises their right to appeal, the institution must respond within 10 working days, and their decision must be conveyed to the student in writing and be consistent with the applicable regulations. If the appeal is denied, the student may, within 10 working days, request that the transfer coordinator of their sending institution intercede on their behalf. Representatives of both institutions must affirm, modify, or reverse the initial decision within 15 working days of the request. This decision is final and must be conveyed to the student in writing.

Regulations – Transfer Coordinator

A *public* institution of higher education must designate a transfer coordinator, who serves as a resource person to transfer students at either the sending or receiving campus. The transfer coordinator is responsible for overseeing the application of the policies and procedures and interpreting transfer policies to the individual student and to the institution.

Student Transfer Advisory Committee

The Student Transfer Advisory Committee (STAC) was codified in statute by Chapter 327 of 2012 for a 10-year period; thus, it terminates June 30, 2022. According to regulations, MHEC must establish a permanent STAC. STAC is expected to review and analyze (1) matriculation and student support services, including admission and advising practices and (2) any other student transfer-related issues referred to it by MHEC. STAC is required to report by December 1 in odd-numbered years.

State Expenditures: MHEC advises that its staff are fully subscribed and that a part-time education program specialist, at an estimated cost of \$55,400 in fiscal 2023, is needed to staff the workgroup and write the required reports. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) advises that, given the expertise required and the condensed six-month timeline, hiring additional staff for the project is likely not practical. Therefore, DLS advises that the workgroup can be staffed, and the report written, with existing resources. However, resources may be redirected from existing priorities.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Higher Education Commission; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Caroline L. Boice

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510