



2022 REPORT

NEW MEXICO TRANSFER SUMMIT REPORT

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PARTNERS



2022 New Mexico Transfer Summit Report

Executive Summary

Supporting efficient and effective transfer between New Mexico institutions of higher education is essential if we are to serve the state’s diverse student populations equitably. The New Mexico Transfer Summit held on March 30, 2022, brought together 285 people, representing both leadership and practitioners, across 30 of the state’s higher education institutions. New Mexico has focused on improving transfer for many years, taking a major step to simplify transfer with the creation in 2017 of a statewide common course numbering system for lower division academic courses and of shared requirements for general education programs built around content areas and five essential skills. To attain either a two-year or four-year degree, students must complete coursework in six approved general education areas of study, including mathematics, science, social and behavioral science, humanities, communications, and creative and fine arts. Students pursuing associate of arts and bachelor's degrees must complete 31 credit hours, or about ten courses in general education, while students pursuing associate of applied science degrees must complete 15 credits, or around five courses. This curriculum also considers skills essential for student success in the workforce and in life, including communication, critical thinking, digital literacy, and personal and social responsibility.

At a hearing before the Legislative Finance Committee last summer, presentations were prepared by the New Mexico Higher Education Department, Central New Mexico Community College, and the University of New Mexico regarding updates on transfer progress. The presentations led to a request by the New Mexico Legislature that the New Mexico Higher Education Department support a statewide transfer convening. Higher Education Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez requested the sponsorship and support of the University of New Mexico. Soon after, a multi-institution planning committee designed a virtual summit. Two members of the committee, David Smith, Associate Provost, New Mexico State University, and Pamela Cheek, Associate Provost for Student Success, University of New Mexico, prepared this summary report, which has been reviewed by the members of the New Mexico Transfer Summit Committee:

- Laura Valdez, Director of Office of Advising Strategies, University of New Mexico (retired), Co-Chair
- Roberto Vasquez, Senior Director for Transfer and Pathways, Central New Mexico Community College, Co-Chair
- Pamela Cheek, Associate Provost for Student Success, University of New Mexico
- Mark Chisholm, Director of Academic Affairs and Policy, New Mexico Higher Education Department
- Jack Crocker, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Western New Mexico University
- Stephanie Doering, Online Academic Advisor and Transfer Coordinator, San Juan Community College
- Sarah E. Dominguez, Transfer and Articulation Officer, University of New Mexico

- Thomasinia Ortiz-Gallegos, Associate Vice President for Student Success, Santa Fe Community College
- Larry Sanderson, Vice President of Institutional Research and Accreditation, New Mexico Junior College
- Kathleen Sena, Operations Research Analyst, New Mexico Higher Education Department
- David Smith, Associate Provost, New Mexico State University

Goals

- To disseminate information on multi-institution enrollment and completion behaviors both nationally and within the state;
- To catalog barriers to effective transfer as observed from community college, comprehensive university, and research university perspectives;
- To identify key requirements and strategies for addressing those barriers;
- To propose specific actions toward building a statewide, cooperative network of higher education institutions in support of transfer process improvement; and
- To describe mechanisms for sharing best practices (advising, on-boarding, etc.) across higher education institutions.

The schedule for the summit included substantial time for break-out room discussions across a wide range of topics, with conversation summaries collected by assigned scribes and facilitators. Based on an analysis of those conversations, four broad issues were identified as focus areas for improving transfer student success:

1. **Collaboration:** Development of a collaborative culture and cooperative transfer practices among New Mexico’s higher education institutions.
2. **Metrics and Data Sharing:** Development of shared data definitions, qualitative and quantitative analytics tools, equity-based metrics, and mechanisms for data sharing.
3. **Student Services and Communication:** Improvement of student services related to advising, pathway transparency, financial aid, onboarding, etc.
4. **Policy, Practices, and Resource Allocation:** Improvement of policy, practices, and resource allocation at State, HED and institution levels to facilitate multi-institution enrollment.

This final report begins with an overview of state and national transfer patterns as described in the summit’s two keynote presentations. This is followed by sections on each of the four issues identified above including discussion of both barriers and recommendations.

I. State and National Transfer Patterns

National data compiled by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) (Teacher's College, Columbia University) and shared by Dave Jenkins and John Fink at the New Mexico Transfer

Summit (see Appendix B) indicate that Hispanic and Black students are disproportionately impacted by disruption in transfer. Among all transfer students nationally who begin their degrees at a community college, 17% complete a bachelor's degree, while only 14% of Hispanic students and 10% of Black students do so. For New Mexico students who begin their degrees at a community college, the community college completion rate is slightly better than the national average (26% vs. 24%) and the completion rate at four-year universities is slightly below the national average (15% vs. 17%). CCRC has determined that students who can transfer 90% of their credits were 2.5% more likely to receive the bachelor's degree compared to students who transfer half or less. They identified the potential for sequencing exciting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses at the community colleges prior to required math courses to engage student interest. Additionally, they noted that poor communication between community colleges and four-year universities as well as lack of clear integration of transfer students into opportunities at higher education institutions awarding bachelor's degrees (such as research, internships, courses with high impact practices, etc.) pose a disadvantage and may hinder completion. CCRC offers a "Dual Enrollment Playbook" and a "Transfer Playbook" for institutional self assessment (<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>).

At the conclusion of each semester, all New Mexico public higher education institutions submit student-level information about enrollment, including status codes that indicate whether a student entered via transfer, to the New Mexico Higher Education Department. In 2020, transfer students comprised approximately 15% of the undergraduate population at New Mexico's research institutions and comprehensive universities, 35% at branch campuses, and 9% at independent community colleges, with the University of New Mexico (UNM), Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), and New Mexico State University (NMSU) enrolling the highest proportions of transfer students. Large numbers of students are enrolled simultaneously at UNM and NMSU and their respective branch campuses as well as other independent community colleges. In 2019, 20% of New Mexico community college students were dual credit high school students; these are prime candidates for transfer. At bachelor's-granting higher education institutions, five areas attract the majority of transfers: psychology, business, biology, pre-health or allied health fields, and undecided or bachelor's of liberal arts. While data submitted to the New Mexico Higher Education Department facilitate high-level analysis of transfer patterns within the state, they do not allow for disaggregation with respect to minoritized populations, first-generation enrollment, or other demographic variables that would be needed to assess equity issues related to transfer.

For the full New Mexico Transfer Summit presentations from which this information is drawn, see Davis Jenkins and John Fink, "From Articulation Agreements to Cross-Sector Talent Pathways Partnerships," New Mexico Transfer Summit 2022, March 30, 2022, and Mark Chisolm, "Policy Presentation," New Mexico Transfer Summit 2022, March 30, 2022.

II. Collaboration

Building a collaborative culture among institutions begins with a recognition of the varied and complementary missions of New Mexico's higher education institutions. Our goal is not to normalize curricula and degree programs across groups of colleges and universities, but rather to work cooperatively in providing pathways to degrees that leverage institutional strengths to best serve our students. It is essential to communicate more effectively to the public why particular degree programs are offered at some schools but not at others and how transfer can offer a means of accessing and completing these degree programs. For example, many higher education institutions are barraged with requests by local stakeholders to create complete nursing programs; these higher education institutions need support in communicating to their communities that the simulation labs, internship supervisions, licensure processes, and accreditation necessary for nursing programs are complex, expensive, and not always feasible for small, rural colleges and universities.

Many of the barriers to successful transfer can be addressed by improving communication and collaboration between higher education institutions. Some of these barriers are curricular in nature. Bachelor's-level program opportunities and requirements are often unclear, or there is poor alignment between associate's and bachelor's degree programs. Some community colleges have insufficient instructional capacity for teaching core, lower-division courses for specialized degrees. Curricular barriers typically result in students completing excess, inapplicable credits and experiencing associated time delays and financial burdens. To improve transfer efficiency, four-year universities must take responsibility for providing clear transfer pathways with accessible and accurate information on program requirements and on which credits will apply toward each degree. Some of these barriers are related to lack of clarity, from the student's perspective, on how to move from one college to another.

To address this, the New Mexico Higher Education Department should facilitate improved communication and relationship building among higher education institutions about institutional transfer practices, requirements, support, information systems, and contact information for transfer specialists. More specifically, an old model of "articulation agreements" has proved difficult to maintain and update as curricula on both sides of a transfer relationship evolve and with little cross-institution infrastructure (curriculum workflow) to manage changes. Transfer pathways and transparent communication about degree requirements have more capacity to address rapidly evolving curricula and to meet student needs.

In their presentation, Davis Jenkins and John Fink discussed "early momentum" indicators for transfer success, emphasizing the importance of offering specialized, degree-relevant courses to students early in their academic careers with high-quality instruction and embedded active or experiential learning. Institutional partnerships, such as the Mellon Foundation funded "Humanities Now!" grant for UNM and CNM, could be used to improve opportunities for incoming community college and dual credit students to explore career and academic options, connect with people and programs in fields of interest, and choose degree pathways early. Collaboration can also be used to improve tailored, transfer-specific advising.

Beyond addressing specific barriers to successful transfer, institutional collaboration can help us build a community of peers for sharing best practices, i.e., transfer advising, on-boarding of new transfer students, etc.

III. Metrics and Data Sharing

To work collaboratively as higher education institutions on improving transfer, we need to have a common language about what “transfer” means and an agreement on how it is measured. One recommendation coming out of the New Mexico Transfer Summit was that our focus should be more generally on “multi-institution enrollment” – a term that encompasses formal transfer processes but also captures other enrollment behaviors including swirling enrollment between two higher education institutions or taking a single course from a college or university to fulfill a particular requirement. *How can the contributions of all institutions be recognized when a student completes a bachelor’s degree?*

Several themes related to metrics and data sharing emerged from the New Mexico Transfer Summit:

- **Shared Data Definitions:** We need to adopt or define shared transfer terminology for things such as:
 - Applicable Credit (credit that may be applied to a bachelor’s degree major)
 - Dual Credit
 - Concurrent Enrollment
 - Co-Enrollment (enrollment in more than one institution simultaneously, as opposed to completion at one and transfer to another)
- **Qualitative and Quantitative Analytics Tools:** Each higher education institution needs qualitative and quantitative data analytics tools to measure transfer patterns and the progress of transfer students. The tools should be readily accessible to transfer practitioners in both academic and student services sectors and provide relevant, formative feedback for improvement efforts. Colleges and universities would benefit from a collaborative effort to develop and share analytics tools. Measurement of statewide transfer patterns would benefit from normalization of some tools or metrics across all higher education institutions. This discussion can take place amongst members of the New Mexico Higher Education Department’s Data Advisory Group.
- **Equity-Based Metrics:** Transfer-related data analytics tools should readily allow for disaggregation of outcomes in terms of race and ethnicity, income, first-generation status, and other relevant demographic variables in order to evaluate equity in transfer processes.
- **Mechanisms for Data Sharing:** Sharing of data across higher education institutions has several potential benefits. For example, community colleges would value information on how their respective students’ progress post-transfer. Sharing of student-level data could

aid substantially in pre-transfer advising, although data privacy issues may preclude this being implemented.

- **State-Level Metrics:** State-level metrics that incentivize successful transfer should be created. How can institutional contributions to a student's completion of a bachelor's degree be recognized even when those contributions don't result in, for example, awarding of a certificate or associate degree?

IV. Student Services and Communication

Many of the barriers to effective transfer may be addressed through information and services provided to students. Several key focus areas were identified during the New Mexico Transfer Summit:

- **Communication (to students and advisors) of information on degree programs, career planning, and credit applicability.** Improved tools for exploration of transfer degree plans based on student interests or completed coursework would be very beneficial to students.
- **Pre-transfer advising with participation or support from receiving higher education institutions and a clear focus on credit applicability.** For example, completion of general education at the community college is a strategy for some students who need to strengthen college-level skills, but it can also be an unsuccessful strategy if it involves a delay in completing pre-requisites and introductory courses necessary for a major in a bachelor's degree.
- **Onboarding of students following transfer.** The socio-cultural challenge of moving from a small community college campus that can be easily navigated to a larger urban school that may feel intimidating and that is at a distance from valued home and cultural ties and responsibilities.
- **Communication with students about admission, enrollment, financial aid, and onboarding processes associated with transfer.** We need to be attentive to the extra-curricular challenges impacting persistence for transfer students, such as financial aid (including work study) and financial aid transfer, student transportation, housing, basic needs, work patterns, and child care. Serving students effectively would be facilitated by deliberate relationship-building between advisors and counselors across higher education institutions, sharing of website information about advising and transfer pathways, orientations and information sessions to create partnerships between transfer institutions, etc.

It was clear from the Summit conversations that many higher education institutions already have innovative, effective processes in place to support multi-institution enrollment. Even the best of these efforts would benefit from improved collaboration between institutions, both direct collaboration (i.e., pre-transfer advising) and in sharing of best practices and communication

tools. All agreed that enhanced data resources are also needed, both to evaluate current patterns of transfer behavior and to better measure transfer student progress.

V. Policy, Practices, and Resource Allocation

Policy, practices, and resource allocation at State, agency, and institution levels should reflect the value of multi-institution pathways to degree completion rather than treating them as an exception.

a. State-level Policy

Participants in the New Mexico Transfer Summit identified both common course numbering and general education reform as having facilitated transfer. The state's common course numbering system (CCNS) provides a statewide catalog of lower-division courses and, for courses common between higher education institutions, documents and assures course-level credit transfer. The CCNS's beneficial impact is mostly as a communication tool rather than actually improving credit transfer. Credits from "unique" courses within the catalog, courses offered at only a single college or university, generally do still transfer, but the catalog doesn't specify how those credits are documented at a receiving higher education institution. Regardless of whether courses are common or unique, the CCNS doesn't address the key issue of applicability of transfer credits toward specific degree programs.

The state's general education (GE) model facilitates both course-level and block GE transfer, requiring that individual GE credits transfer as such, and that GE completion at one higher education institution transfers as a "block" assuring GE completion at any other New Mexico college or university. As with the CCNS, however, the GE model doesn't assure applicability of transfer credits toward specific degree requirements. Many degrees embed disciplinary degree requirements within the GE system, such as requiring a calculus-based physics course for an engineering degree while also using that course to meet a GE science requirement. Credits transferred for a GE-certified, algebra-based physics course, while satisfying the GE science requirement, would not be applicable to the more specific engineering degree requirement.

Currently, state metrics for higher education institutions incentivize certificate and degree production. This has led to a proliferation of associates of arts (AA) and associates of sciences (AS) degrees that encourage students to complete 60 credit hours, some of which may or may not serve as credit applicable to a major on the bachelor's level. In many cases, students benefit from the preparation offered by the AA and AS. However, students do not always understand which credits will apply to a major and they do not always need to complete the associate degree prior to matriculating to a bachelor's program. New Mexico can incentivize successful transfer by crediting both the institution "sending" the transfer student and the institution "receiving" the transfer student for completion of the bachelor's, such as in the higher education funding formular, Instruction and General (I&G) funding. Encouraging

reverse articulation, i.e., granting of an associate degree based on part on credits completed at a four-year university, may be part of this incentivization.

Other state metrics might also be used to incentivize collaboration across higher education institutions. For example:

- Improvement in average time at community college or branch pre-transfer for students who successfully transfer;
- Improvement in average time to completion of bachelor's degree for transfer students; and
- Reduction in total number of credit hours among transfer students, i.e., the average number of credits for graduating transfer students at UNM decreased by five credit hours between 2016 and 2021.

b. Administration by the New Mexico Higher Education

Department

The New Mexico Higher Education Department can play a critical role in facilitating communication and collaborative work between higher education institutions for the improvement of transfer processes. The New Mexico Transfer Summit was a good first step in fostering a statewide collaborative culture. The agency should use its convening authority to see that the work is continued, whether through narrowly-focused working groups or broader events such as the New Mexico Transfer Summit.

Specific recommendations:

- It would be helpful if the agency would disseminate information regarding both the benefits and limitations of the CCNS and GE model on transfer to dispel misunderstandings and myths that seem currently prevalent.
- Higher education institutions should be recognized for specific measures taken to support transfer students, such as transfer orientations, web information on transfer pathways, scholarships for transfer students, inclusion of dual credit and concurrent enrollment in transfer advising and information. Higher education institutions should also commit to best practices identified by the New Mexico Transfer Summit and work in partnership with the New Mexico Higher Education Department in sharing their work toward improving transfer pathways for students.
- The agency and the New Mexico Public Education Department should continue to collaborate through the Dual Credit Council on creating a strong approach to dual credit through inclusion of dual credit in transfer efforts, specifically, aligning dual credit policies between the sister agencies; setting metrics to incentivize successful "transfer" for high school dual credit and concurrent enrollment students into college; supporting communication and advising on applicable credit (credit that may be applied successfully to a degree program or major as opposed to credit that may

simply be used as non-specific college credit). Higher education institutions should also commit to implementing these best practices at their higher education institutions when high school students seek advisement or other counsel on their campuses.

- The agency should engage higher education institutions in developing "ready to transfer" indicators that could be used with high school and community college students.

In all work to establish metrics, it will be important to acknowledge the different missions of higher education institutions and to balance the interests of community colleges and branch campuses—and the communities they serve—with the interests of other colleges and universities, recognizing that community colleges far outnumber bachelor's-granting universities even as all higher education institutions have an equal interest in making it possible for students in New Mexico to transfer effectively.

c. Institution-Level Policy, Practices, and Resource Allocation

Ultimately, our success as institutions in supporting transfer will depend not only on the hard work of transfer practitioners and experts, but also on how well our institutional policies, practices, and resource allocation are tailored for that goal. Therefore, the New Mexico Transfer Summit was designed to involve high-level leadership from each higher education institution. As an organizing committee for the conference, it is our hope that the New Mexico Transfer Summit and this report will stimulate reflection and encourage collaboration as we move forward as a state for the prosperity and academic success of our students.