



ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Barbara A. Beno, President
Susan S. Kazama, Chair

September 6, 2016

Dear California Community Colleges' Chief Executive Officers:

This morning ITT Technical Institutes (ITT) announced to its students and staff that it is closing all of its campuses immediately. The institution is accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools, a national accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and has campuses in several states.

When an accredited institution closes in our Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) region, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) reaches out to its member institutions to ask them, if at all possible, to assist students who wish to complete their studies. **I am writing to ask that your institution consider providing assistance to the students who will be displaced by these closures.**

While ACCJC's policies and standards make clear each institution is to have its own policies on transfer of credit, it is important to remember that an ACCJC-accredited institution is encouraged to accept transfer of credit from any institution accredited by a federally recognized accrediting body. So we encourage you to consider ITT Technology Institutes' students if they seek to enroll in your institution. ACCJC's *Policy on the Transfer of Credit* is enclosed, and it includes the following ideas:

- Institutions need to have clear institutional policies on how academic credit is awarded and on how students can transfer academic credit. Institutions need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to transfer of credit to benefit students.
- Accredited institutions have the responsibility to provide for effective transfer of credit that minimizes student difficulties in moving between institutions while assuring the high quality of their education. Each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit, including transfer of credits from non-accredited institutions.
- Receiving institutions must ensure that decisions are based on a fair assessment of the sending institution's educational quality and may include regional, specialized and national accredited status of an institution, along with other factors.

ITT has campuses in California in Clovis, Concord, Cordoba, Corona, Lathrop, National City, Oakland, Orange, Oxnard and Rancho Cordova, San Dimas, Sylmar and Vista. ITT has developed a crosswalk of its programs and the nearby colleges that have similar programs of study. The portion of that crosswalk relevant to ACCJC's institutions *is attached*. Institutions near these campuses may be able to assist students' transfer into similar or like programs they may offer, or transfer of credits toward further studies for a different degree. Your institution

may also consider whether it is appropriate, in accordance with the ACCJC's *Policy on the Direct Assessment of Learning*, to award credit for prior learning.

We urge your institution to consider providing assistance to the students of ITT Technical Institutes so that they are able to continue their studies toward a meaningful degree and future. Please feel free to call ACCJC at if you have any questions. ACCJC will be posting some information regarding our policies on the ACCJC website by tomorrow end of day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara A. Beno".

Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.

BAB/cms

cc: Accreditation Liaison Officers

Policy on Transfer of Credit

(Adopted January 2005; Revised January 2010)

Background

Students experience transfer of credit as an issue critical to the successful completion of their educational goals. The majority of students attending two-year and community colleges typically attend more than one institution before completing their degree or certificate program. In addition, a large proportion of students seeking degrees or certificates will desire to pursue higher education at some time in the future.

Many factors contribute to student attendance at multiple institutions of higher learning;

- Economic, geographic and employment mobility;
- Desire to transfer distance learning credits to site-based institutions;
- Desire to transfer credit for experiences gained from employer training programs;
- Desire to transfer credits from foreign institutions.

These situations necessitate clear institutional policies on how academic credit is awarded and on how students can transfer academic credit. Institutions need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to facilitating transfer of credit to benefit students.

ACCJC is committed to:

- Enhancing educational opportunity by facilitating student mobility;
- Helping institutions to develop effective transfer of credit practices;
- Assuring that institutional transfer of credit practices are consistent with accreditation standards and policies;
- Maintaining effective communication between the Commission and member institutions in order to facilitate institutional adherence to standards and policies and support improvement of transfer of credit between institutions.

Policy

Accredited institutions have a responsibility to provide for effective transfer of credit that minimizes student difficulties in moving between institutions while assuring the high quality of their education. Each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit including transfer of credits from non-accredited institutions. Institutions shall establish policies on the transfer of credit that are clearly stated and that function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. At the same time, institutions shall be responsible for careful evaluation of credits that students wish to transfer. Institutions must balance responsiveness to students' preferences about transfer of credit and institutional commitment to the value and quality of degrees, certificates, or other credentials that the receiving institution awards.

Policy Elements

Institutions considering transfer of credit from another institution must evaluate and ensure that:

- There is a balanced approach to decisions about whether to accept transfer of credit. Clearly stated policies and procedures for consideration of transfer of credit must be developed, followed, and maintained. Sound mechanisms for ongoing review and updating of policies and procedures must be established. The policy must include a statement of criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education¹;
- The educational quality of the sending institution is the primary consideration. Receiving institutions must ensure that decisions are based on a fair assessment of the institution's educational quality and may include the regional, specialized and national accredited status of an institution, along with other factors as appropriate. Institutions should be flexible and open in considering alternative or innovative forms of educational delivery that may characterize the institution where the student received the credits proposed for transfer;
- There is assurance that the institution from which a student desires to transfer credit is a legitimate institution accredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body or that the institution, if in another country, is approved by the legitimate accreditation or quality assurance agencies that operate in that country;
- There is assurance that transcripts and other credentials provided for purposes of transfer of credit are legitimate and, if validated by a third party foreign credential services, that the credential service agency is valid²;
- The nature, content, associated student learning outcomes, and level of credit(s) earned at the sending institution are comparable to those of the credit(s) offered at the receiving institution;
- The credit(s) earned for the programs offered by the sending institution, in light of the student's educational goals, are appropriate and applicable to the credits the student seeks to transfer to the receiving institution's program;
- The receiving institution acts consistently and fairly in its review of the courses that students propose to transfer for credit. Students must be treated equitably as they seek to transfer credit, and institutions must consider all requests to transfer credit carefully before making decisions; and,
- College publications used to inform or recruit students provide accurate and timely information about transfer of credit policies and procedures to students, the public, and sending institutions. The information should include clearly defined procedures, deadlines, and documents needed from sending institutions when attempting transfer of credit as well as essential academic factors that are involved in transfer of credit decisions (such as existing course equivalencies, content and/or student learning outcomes, grades, course level and applicability toward a degree, certificate, or program prerequisite). These policies must be publically disclosed.

Effective public communication is maintained through an ongoing exchange with students and the public about transfer of credit opportunities and limitations through catalogues, counseling and advising, and websites. Ongoing contact and information exchange among

¹ Required by the Higher Opportunities Education Act as amended.

² ACCJC recommends that AACRAO services be used.

institutions that routinely send and receive transfer students must be sustained. Information to students and the public about special circumstances that may affect the ease or difficulty of transfer of credit shall be provided.

Where software or a website is used to offer customized transfer of credit information or information on articulation agreements to students, it is accurate and current. Where provision is made for electronic transfer of credit, application for transcript analysis, or other key functions, it is confidential, secure, accurate and current.

Policy on Direct Assessment of Learning

(Adopted June 1980; Revised June 1990, June 2008, January 2009, January 2014)

Background¹

The growing complexity of policies and practices for transfer and award of credit has been brought about, in part, by the changing nature of postsecondary education. With increasing frequency, students are pursuing their education in a variety of institutional and extra-institutional settings. Policies on transfer and award of credit should encompass educational accomplishment attained in extra-institutional settings.

Most programs which provide students with the means to acquire knowledge and skills at an individual pace and then to demonstrate achievement of specific competencies to apply toward a course, certificate or degree, do so by clock hour or credit awards. However, an increasing number of programs provide for award of certificate or degree by direct assessment of student learning.²

Transfer and award of credit is a concept that increasingly involves transfer between dissimilar institutions and curricula and recognition of extra-institutional learning, as well as transfer between institutions and curricula with similar characteristics. As their personal circumstances and educational objectives change, students seek to have their learning, wherever and however attained, recognized by institutions where they enroll for further study. It is important for institutions to develop reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for acceptance of such learning experiences, as well as for the transfer of credits earned at another institution. Such policies and procedures should provide consideration for the individual student who has changed institutions or objectives. It is the receiving institution's responsibility to provide reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for determining a student's knowledge in required subject areas. Institutions also have a responsibility to advise the student that the work reflected on the transcript may or may not be accepted by a receiving institution as bearing the same (or any) credits as those awarded by the provider.

The basic principle is that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer, acceptance, and award of credit. Institutions are

¹ The background information comes from the Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit, initially created in 1978, and revised in 2001. The three signatories are national associations whose member institutions are directly involved in the transfer and award of academic credit: the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Council on Education, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Information from the March 19, 2013 Dear Colleague letter of the U.S. Department of Education on applying for Title IV eligibility for direct assessment (competency-based) programs is also included.

² The U.S. Department of Education has clarified that programs of this nature may be approved for award of Federal Student Assistance (FSA), using an equivalency calculation of clock hours or credits to determine the basis for payment and award of FSA. However, FSA may be awarded only for learning overseen by the institution. Pre-collegiate coursework and preparatory coursework required for entry into a certificate or degree program do not qualify for FSA if they involve direct assessment of learning.

encouraged to review their policies and practices periodically to assure that they accomplish the institutions' objectives and that they function in a manner that is fair and equitable to all students. The institution's articulation and transfer procedures should evaluate courses, programs and other learning experiences on their learning outcomes, and the existence of valid measures for assessing learning.

Policy

The Commission is committed to excellence and integrity in credits, certificates and degrees awarded by member institutions. Institutional policies and procedures must outline the process and standards by which direct assessment of learning is conducted and credits, certificates, and degrees are awarded.

Policy Elements

Assessing Learning

In making the determination whether to award college credits, certificates, and degrees to students for prior learning:³

1. Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.
2. Assessment should be based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning that are published.
3. Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning, not separate from it, and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.
4. The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts.
5. Credit or other credentialing should be appropriate to the context in which it is awarded and accepted.
6. If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
7. Policies, procedures, and criteria applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available to all parties involved in the assessment process.
8. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.
9. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed for currency.

Selection of Evaluators⁴

Faculty members who conduct the evaluation of prior learning experience exercise professional judgment and competency in applying the evaluative criteria and procedures. Faculty who are involved in evaluating prior learning should have the data necessary to

³ Standards for Assessing Learning; Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), Chicago, Illinois; adapted from *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures* (Second Edition); M. Fiddler, C. Marienau, and U. Whitaker; Chicago: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company; 2006.

⁴ Refer to the guides for the evaluation of educational experiences, Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials, American Council on Education (ACE), Washington, DC.

determine the skills, competencies, and knowledge held by the candidate for direct assessment of learning, including position descriptions, outlines of training programs completed, and records of examinations taken, if any; and the means to compare the demonstrated learning with the learning outcomes acquired by students who have completed the related course or curriculum.