Commission on Colleges
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
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TRANSFER OF ACADEMIC CREDIT

- A Position Statement -

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the regional accrediting body for the eleven southeastern states, recognizes that issues surrounding transfer of academic credit continue to generate debate nationally. The debate touches on questions of accountability, access, and equity in the higher education community. The Commission encourages its member institutions to review their transfer policies and procedures with a view toward making transfer of credit easier for students while continuing to honor their obligation to maintain academic quality and integrity. Institutions participating in self-regulatory, non-governmental accreditation are responsible to the public for establishing transfer processes that address both views.

Transfer of academic credit is a public policy issue for several reasons: (1) an increase in student mobility, (2) the proliferation of distance learning programs and common acceptance of their legitimacy, (3) the economics of expending public money twice for the same course, and (4) consumer protection from expending private money twice for the same course.

The Commission supports institutional autonomy in determining its own own standards for transfer of academic credit while also encouraging institutions not to impose artificial impediments or meaningless requirements on the transfer process. Many systems and institutions have taken positive action such as negotiating articulation agreements, common course listings, common core curricular, and automatic acceptance of credit arrangements to facilitate the transfer of academic credit. These kinds of proactive approaches, involving qualified faculty in the decisions, ease the way toward resolving transfer of credit problems while maintaining curricular coherence and academic and institutional integrity.

The accreditation standards of this Commission require member institutions to analyze credit accepted for transfer in terms of level, content, quality, comparability, and degree program relevance. The accreditation standards do **not** mandate that institutions accept transfer credit only from regionally accredited institutions. When an institution relies on another institution's regional accreditation as an indicator for acceptability of credit, it should not be the only criterion used for acceptability nor should it be represented as a requirement of this accreditation agency, which it is not.

Maintaining academic quality and integrity remains the primary responsibility of each institution accredited by the Commission on Colleges. This position paper should not be interpreted as supporting any idea that would undermine that responsibility or as impinging on the institution's right to establish and enforce its own policies. At the same time, the Commission encourages member institutions to consider ways in which they might ease the acceptance of transfer of academic credit while maintaining an acceptable level of academic quality reflecting their unique missions.

Approved: Commission on Colleges, June 2003