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The Metropolitan University and the Community College

A New Symbiosis

The traditional relationship between the two-year community college and the four-year college or university has been characterized by the word* articulation—*the mechanics of transfer, with emphasis on the courses that do or do not transfer from one institution to another. This article describes a new and more significant relationship that is especially important for metropolitan universities and their two-year counterparts. It is* collaboration, *which builds on existing articulation efforts and focuses on sharing of additional critical information and resources as both institutions work toward common goals.

Beyond Articulation to Collaboration

Metropolitan universities are no strangers to their two-year counterparts—the community colleges that have emerged as major players in higher education, particularly in urban areas. That is not surprising, because the two categories of institutions have much in common. Both are deeply committed to improving the social and economic future of the areas they serve, while at the same time fostering the intellectual growth of their students.

Over the past decades, the community colleges have become for many the bridge between secondary education and the baccalaureate degree. The process of articulation, therefore, has long been a crucial element in the ability of a community college student to transfer to a four-year institution. Transfer continues to this day as a measurement applied by society to determine the success of a community college. The ease with which students transfer and the lack of credits lost in transfer figure prominently in analyses of transfer success, as does the award of the associate degree. Recently, the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) has increased its focus on the transfer function and has reiterated its commitment to this activity in its long-range planning documents as well as in its research work.

But concentration on the process of articulation is not enough. Rather, it is collaboration among two-year and four-year institutions that ought to be the goal. *Articulation* suggests the mechanics of transfer, with emphasis on the extent to which students take the necessary prerequisites for junior-level college work. *Collaboration*, on the other hand, assumes that there is a process by which students can successfully complete community college courses that are acceptable to the four-year institution, and that the two institutions are working together to complement each other's mission for the benefit of the students and the community. Beyond discussions about courses, the institutions are sharing information about students, about teaching, and about resources available to each other. Even more important is that they are themselves working toward common educational, social, and economic goals within the community. Above all, there is mutual respect for the work of each institution.

In recent years, some community colleges and metropolitan universities have begun to move in the direction of real collaboration, and the prospects for the future are encouraging. In 1987, the AACJC published a report on the Urban Community College/Transfer Opportunities Program (UCC/TOP), which had been established several years before with a grant from the Ford Foundation in order to understand and improve transfer opportunities for students, especially minorities. An overview of the report, "Transfer—Making it Work," was published in the winter 1988 issue of *Change*. It included a list of recommendations for improving transfer and establishing productive collaborations between two- and four-year colleges. These recommendations are similar to those made by one of the present authors in 1971, when he characterized effective collaborative interinstitutional relationship as having three principal dimensions: information, communication, and interaction.

The dimension of information includes whether there is strong communication between institutions, both formal and informal, and whether there exist collaborative public relations, publications, and recruitment information pieces. The communication dimension depends on whether counterparts talk with one another, beginning with the chief officers and extending to other administrators and faculty, and whether there are written articulation policy statements. Questions regarding the interaction dimension focus on actual involvement of individuals and groups at both institutions, whether there are cooperatively planned activities and events, and whether there is actual evidence of strong program articulation.

The National Scene

A number of interesting events that pertain to transfer and interinstitutional interaction are occurring at the national level and therefore are particularly noteworthy in this discussion. Throughout the country we have seen new calls for accountability and assessment of learning. This has translated into examinations sometimes given as a prerequisite for junior-level courses, and a variety of other projects aimed at providing quality control indicators for a public increasingly concerned about the quality and consistency of higher education. As part of such efforts,

increasing attention is given to the successful transfer of community college students to universities. For metropolitan institutions, this has also meant special scrutiny of the success with which minority students make their transitions.

The development of the National Center for Academic Achievement and Transfer within the American Council on Education is the most visible initiative in this area. This project is funded by the Ford Foundation and is a multiyear, multimillion-dollar effort that attempts to understand and act on issues related to academic achievement and transfer, particularly for low-income and minority populations in the nation's major urban areas. While the project focuses on cities and minorities, the context in which the research and development projects are taking place is generally applicable to the broader issues.

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Another related activity is taking place at the University of California, Los Angeles. There, the Ford Foundation has also funded the Transfer Assembly Project, which will attempt to provide a research base for tracking transfer students.

Student transfer issues are particularly important at this time of diminishing financial resources, when increasing public scrutiny is accompanied by calls for accountability. A case in point is the current activity surrounding the reauthorization of federal financial aid legislation. Most institutions would prefer to avoid the impression, however untrue, that students have to repeat courses they have already taken at another institution. Any additional burden on the student financial aid system, delayed entry into the job market, or increases of the federal loan indebtedness of students are not popular issues among the general public or elected officials.

New Forms of Institutional Connections

The increased emphasis on transfer has brought about some interesting institutional connections that transcend the usual models wherein students complete all of an associate-level program before transferring to the baccalaureate degree-granting institution.

The so-called 2+2+2 programs are one collaborative model that is just now beginning to appear in metropolitan regions. These programs provide both mid-point achievement levels and a seamless curriculum that spans high school, the community college, and the university. They address especially the needs of high school students who otherwise might not continue their education. This effort is of particular interest to metropolitan universities, which are trying to find effective ways of helping schools to decrease the number of dropouts among the inner city population. The vast majority of high school students within a metropolitan area need to have their aspirations raised, and they need to be nurtured toward advanced education. Some community colleges, such as Boston's Bunker Hill, are working with schools to develop modified apprenticeship programs that are more work-based than the 2+2+2 programs. A number of educators argue that otherwise unmotivated students tend to do well

in such programs because of the close connection between academic work and practical applications.

Two examples of innovative collaborative efforts to bring about new types of interinstitutional connection are the summer project between Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, and LaGuardia Community College, and a similar January term program linking Western Maryland College, in Westminster, Maryland, and Catonsville Community College in Baltimore County. Both of these projects represent new ways of looking at articulation and transfer. In both instances, less emphasis is on defining courses that transfer and more is placed on increasing student awareness of institutions they might otherwise not think of as options to consider as they continue their education. Community college students need more information about the variety of opportunities available to them as university students, including scholarships, majors, career opportunities, and campus life.

Although these projects target nontraditional students, both hold lessons for the general student population. The key to the success of these projects, of course, relies on the commitment, at the executive and administrative level, to the notion that both institutions profit. But the essential other ingredient is the involvement of faculty and staff in their day-to-day working with the students. Once the four-year college faculty see for themselves, in their own classrooms, the abilities of these transferring students, they become more likely to be open to transfer efforts. Even more important, successful projects lead to increased trust between institutions.

There is another major trend that affects transfer relationships between two- and four-year colleges: the increasing number of students who wish to transfer from career or technical types of programs. The original model of community and technical college programming provided separate tracks: one for those students who, from the very beginning of their collegiate careers, were planning transfer to a four-year college or university; the other, for those who were oriented toward direct job entry. Today, however, more and more students who complete technical programs in a community college recognize that they must continue their education. In the traditional model, this would have meant added years to take transfer-type courses before a student could move on. More recently, educators and, for that matter, the nation have discovered that adult learning does not follow a linear path, and that discovery is leading to the development of a number of innovative programs for this population.

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The development of bachelor of technology programs is just one manifestation of this new understanding. Such programs usually enable community college technology students to transfer directly into the upper division of a four-year institution. In some cases, the upper division emphasis is placed primarily on the liberal arts and sciences; in others, the principal focus is on the further development of the technical skills area, coupled with added general education. These programs owe much of

their genesis to the allied health professions, particularly nursing, which early on recognized the need for continuing professional development of its members. Across the nation, nursing educators began to create a number of BS/RN programs, in which associate degree nurses can continue to the bachelor of science degree in nursing without losing time for having been in a direct career track earlier in their educational development.

Upper-division colleges and universities are also assisting in broadening the prospects for students in community college career programs. Buttressed by a new awareness that collaboration can be mutually beneficial, collaborative models are beginning to emerge even within traditional university settings. The University of Maryland School of Medicine, for example, has recently created the Department of Research and Laboratory Technologies, which will concentrate on recruiting community college students who will come from both general science programs and career programs in laboratory or chemical/biological technologies.

Numerous other collaborative projects are being carried out by consortia of colleges or pairs of individual institutions. These efforts are significant. They have found a way to respect the autonomy of individual institutions and their missions; and, simultaneously, they focus on the special needs of today's students. The projects focus on student success and progress through the educational system, and they avoid spurious qualitative distinctions between community colleges and four-year institutions. All of them are contributing to a national climate in which productive conversations can and should occur. The end result of such conversations among those various segments of higher education will certainly improve the transfer situation for students.

Maryland: Transfer in Transition

The state of Maryland is an excellent example of existing and emerging trends in transfer and interinstitutional relationships. A state-mandated transfer policy has existed for many years, but until recently it was subjected to benign neglect. It has now been revised and updated to reflect the needs of students more adequately. In addition, what has taken place is a major reorganization of what had been a strong and very independent mix of state colleges, universities, and community colleges. Now, all higher education institutions are responding to a newly established Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and its cabinet-level secretary. MHEC is responsible for the state's colleges, universities, and two-year colleges. Today, all of these institutions are enjoined to be more specific about their mission and to be accountable in the accomplishment of that mission.

As one of its first tasks, MHEC convened a group of two- and four-year administrators to review and update the state's articulation policy. In turn, this led to the establishment of a Student Transfer Advisory Committee to monitor transfer throughout the state. MHEC asked this committee to consider whether a common course numbering system statewide or a common core of courses should be mandated to meet the general education

requirements at all of the colleges in the state. The committee will continue to work on a variety of such issues surrounding articulation and curriculum.

The University of Maryland System has long had a director of articulation who stimulated formal contacts between the two-year and four-year institutions. Recently, that role has become considerably more critical, because the state has developed a computerized course matching system that is able to relate every course offered by the eleven campuses of the university with all of the related courses offered by the seventeen community colleges. This system, ARTSYS, will also be used as a basis for electronic transmission of student transcripts. ARTSYS will be accessible via personal computers at every community college in the state and, therefore, will allow the student to select more carefully the courses that would meet the requirements of individual institutions.

University/Community College Relationship: A Working Model

Not surprisingly, especially close collaboration has developed between the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) and Catonsville Community College (CCC). The two institutions are neighbors, located within two miles of one another, and both were founded during the 1960s. Of course, they are very different. UMBC is a doctoral degree-granting research university and member of the University of Maryland System; it enrolls almost 11,000 graduate and undergraduate students, about 20 percent of whom are residential; and of its 600-member faculty, approximately 380 are full time. CCC enrolls 13,000 credit-seeking students on its main and one satellite campus; about 75 percent are part time, none are residential, and 250 of its 1,000 member faculty are full time.

Yet within the past five years, new presidents arrived at both institutions, and through their combined energies, collaborative initiatives on over a dozen fronts have begun to take shape. Many of those efforts seem almost to assume the seamlessness of articulation and transfer among the two institutions.

UMBC and CCC are located in the southwestern segment of Baltimore County, not far from Baltimore's inner city and its majority black population. Both institutions have been collaborating on minority outreach projects, and today work together with the Upward Bound project, based at UMBC and CCC. In the summer, black teenagers attending both institutions live on the UMBC campus, tutors are trained at UMBC through the Learning Resources Center, and students receive remedial education from UMBC and CCC personnel. This involves collaboration between the two tutorial centers year-round.

The two institutions co-host joint on-campus visits for Baltimore County school students who are unlikely to be college bound in the absence of effective outreach. Last year, for example, students from five middle schools were brought to both campuses for tours and learning experiences. UMBC and CCC also cosponsor awareness workshops for parents to give them information about the transition from high school to college—from finances to admissions processes to attitudinal aspects.

UMBC students take lower-division courses for credit at CCC during the summer and often during the main school year because a particular course is not offered, is full, or conflicts with another scheduled course. And as entrance standards at UMBC have become more stringent and the admissions process has become more selective, some students who otherwise might have become lost in a research university are referred to CCC, where they can benefit from the strong teaching environment that it offers.

The two institutions collaborate in a number of ways to ensure student success in the transfer process. UMBC makes available to CCC the academic progress of the transfer students, department by department, in order that professors can know how their students are progressing. And CCC makes available lists of its students who intend to transfer, so that UMBC can begin to work with them well in advance of their entry to the upper divisions.

As early as 1987, the two institutions signed a Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement and both have on-line access to each other's automated library catalog. CCC can search UMBC's microcomputer database of state documents. By 1990, the two campuses had linked into BITNET and were exploring Internet, through which UMBC and CCC faculty have the ability to sign in remotely to a distant computer over the network.

Both institutions are collaborating with Yokohama Academy in Japan. Japanese students live in UMBC residential facilities and are part of the residential life program at UMBC. They study at CCC but have the opportunity of taking some course work at UMBC. The program began in the summer of 1990, and it is assumed that students who are successful at CCC will complete their baccalaureate degree either at UMBC or other American four-year institutions.

Numerous collaborative projects have found a way to respect the autonomy of individual institutions and their missions.

Another shared endeavor that has attracted great attention in the media is the Maryland State games, a summer statewide Olympics-type competition that attracts athletes from around the state. Housed at UMBC and in other facilities close by, the athletes use the expansive facilities of both UMBC and CCC for a number of athletic events and draw upon ex-pert management and support personnel available from both institutions.

Discussions are ongoing about other areas of collaboration, including campus security, mutual parking arrangements, shared use of heavy equipment, the roles of the two institutions in relation to a research park being built on the UMBC campus, and the possibility of renovation and shared use of buildings close to the two campuses. Events and lectures are becoming, increasingly, of interest to both campuses. This summer, for example, both institutions sponsored for their faculties and staffs the seminar by Uri Treisman, professor of mathematics at Berkeley, who spoke about minority achievement in mathematics and science.

Some arrangements that have been explored by the two organizations do not work. UMBC's Student Health Services, which is fully accredited by the American College Health Association, operates through a team of

nurse practitioners. It attempted to provide women's health services to CCC students. Although the proposal posed no logistical problems, the contractual arrangement did not conform to the accreditation requirements for the UMBC program, and, consequently, the shared initiative was disbanded. Also, the UMBC shuttle bus service was to have been extended into the CCC campus proper. This arrangement has been superseded by the metropolitan-area bus service, which serves both campuses, door-to-door.

Questions for Self-Assessment

Throughout the five-year period of increased collaboration between UMBC and CCC, administrators in both institutions found it useful to assess the strength of the relationship by asking themselves a number of questions:

- What are our attitudes about the other institution?
- Do we understand the mission of the other collaborating institution and the roles that it plays in higher education and in the regions that it serves?
- Do we appreciate the strengths of the other institution?
- Have we some idea of the resources of each institution?
- Are we aware of how the two institutions are currently working with one another?
- Are we aware of some of the problems students experience when they transfer from the two-year to the four-year institution?
- Do we know how students are advised and counseled before they transfer? And does the two-year institution know through receipt of academic records and other less formal communication how the transfer students are performing in their new surroundings?
- Do faculty at both institutions have the opportunity to discuss curriculum issues—for example, course content, course sequencing, and student expectations?
- Do those involved in the transfer process know each other through personal conversation?
- Is there a system for referrals that provides a team approach regarding the student's education?
- Do faculty and staff have an idea of how each can complement one another? And do they talk about potential linkages such as the exchange of facilities or other resources?
- Do the two institutions have any special insights as to how the other is contributing to the support of economic development in the region or furthering service within the community?

Articulation becomes collaboration when most of these questions can be answered in the affirmative. And collaboration is imperative because the trend is clear. Metropolitan universities are accepting more and more community college students. For example, in 1985–1986 UMBC enrolled 861 transfer students. By 1991–1992, that number had grown to 1,366 transfer students. It is also clear that more students are selecting

community colleges with the intention of transferring to the four-year institutions for a variety of reasons, including finances and strength of academic programs.

It is imperative, therefore, that the process of collaboration become interwoven into the fabric of both types of institutions, that its importance be fully understood and supported at all levels, and that transfer and articulation receive a priority status in the day-to-day operations and long-range planning of the two. And as we suggest from these examples drawn from the national level, from state initiatives begun in Maryland, and from the university and community college level, personal contact and personal awareness are the key ingredients to making the symbiosis an effective one.

Suggested Readings

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