


Impact of a Proviso to the MACRAO Transfer Agreement

Presented by:
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Introduction

- For more than 30 years, the MACRAO Transfer Agreement has been an important advising tool.
- About half of the four-year colleges and universities who are members of the agreement have provisos.
- In an effort to become more “transfer friendly”, NMU is in the process of reviewing certain policies regarding transfer students. One policy being discussed is our proviso to this agreement.

Email Survey Question

- An email was sent to 90 community college counselors at 28 Michigan community colleges with the following question:

“When a school has a proviso, does it have an impact on how you advise your students? If so, please explain.”

Responses to Survey

- 26 counselors responded, representing 18 community colleges
- This presentation is a collection of comments and insights provided by respondents to the survey
- Presentation Outline:
 1. Provisos Do Not Effect Advising
 2. Provisos Effect Advising
 3. Agreement vs. Guides
 4. Comments & Perceptions
 5. Summary

Provisos Do Not Effect Advising

- *“It doesn't make any difference for the students.”*
- *“Students are encouraged to fulfill MACRAO by taking into account the provisos that any institution has presented.”*
- *“On our website, we list all of the provisos for the four-year institutions (as found on the MACRAO website) so that a student has an idea of the additions/changes that will need to be incorporated into their transfer plan.”*
- *“It doesn't have much of an impact on how I advise since any additional coursework required by the four-year institution can be used as elective courses.”*

Provisos Do Not Effect Advising, continued...

- *“I don't concentrate too much on the provisos, particularly when I have a transfer guide.”*
- *“Provisos do not complicate the advising so much as they forestall the choice of transfer institution.”*
- *“It is to difficult to be able to keep up with each schools' exceptions, I find myself doing just the MACRAO and saying there may be a class or two to take at the university to fulfill general requirements.”*

Provisos Effect Advising

- *“Provisos make advising much harder, both for the advisor and the student.”*
- *“It is always more time intensive to advise a student under a proviso especially if the advisor is not familiar with what the provisos actually mean. This often dictates that the advisor get clarification as to the school’s proviso and transferability of courses as it applies to the proviso.”*
- *“The MACRAO agreement itself is plain and easily understood. When provisos are added, it makes it difficult to remember which colleges have which provisos.”*

Provisos Effect Advising, continued...

- *“We have a very small advising staff but it has a very high turn-over rate. When a 4-year institution has a proviso, advising students becomes more difficult and potentially error prone.”*
- *“New advisors are stressed to learn the information needed to advise students about our programs and courses. When you add into that equation the complexities of the numerous transfer institutions’ general education requirements, you can see the advantage to us of using a straight MACRAO package (without considering provisos)”*

Provisos Effect Advising, continued...

- *“With the high number of advisees which may be assigned to an advisor, it is sometimes difficult in terms of time and resources to determine the “ins and outs” of these provisos. As the transfer coordinator, I make every attempt to keep our academic advisors (who are faculty members) up-to-date on transfer issues but exceptions/additions/changes which come with provisos make the advising process a little more tricky.”*
- *“They put more hurdles in front of a transferring student and a greater burden on already overloaded counseling/advising staff.”*

Provisos Effect Advising, continued...

- *“If a proviso is in place... I will usually tell a student to contact an advisor from the institution to see what credits they will accept. Unfortunately, we do not have the time to do this kind of research for students.”*
- *“The MACRAO agreement is easier to sell to a student if there are no provisos. When there are provisos, students and staff get confused and I don’t think bother with the MACRAO.”*
- *“It is too difficult to be able to keep up with each school’s exceptions, I find myself doing just the MACRAO and saying there may be a class or two to take at the university to fulfill general requirements.”*

Provisos Effect Advising, continued...

- *“Many of our students seem to transfer to institutions which are closer...”*
- *“It is much easier if I am clear about what provisos are required. It is inconvenient for the student if we do not know specifically what the provisos are and I end up having to refer them to the transfer university.”*

Comments & Perceptions

- *“Depending on the proviso, a student may actually be inclined to go to a more "MACRAO friendly" school since there are generally other options. Schools that have no, or a very limited, proviso are much easier to work with than those who insist on several courses in addition to the MACRAO stamp.”*
- *“Students are more prone to choose an institution where they can easily transfer without a loss of credits in the transfer process.”*

Comments & Perceptions, continued...

- *“A student wanting an associate degree and considering two different colleges with two different provisos gets very confusing for the student. Sometimes the complication will steer the student toward a school that is simpler transfer.”*
- *“When I speak with students, I mention those schools in which the MACRAO works well, and also draw attention to those that don't.”*
- *“Most students start by wanting to transfer and only later choose the school based on what they have already taken.”*

Comments & Perceptions, continued...

- *“MACRAO provisos are the “Gotcha clauses” in this agreement. They are the asterisks that are a pain. I have seen those sour students who are comparing different schools. I do not think a student who is definitely interested in college X will give up on it because it has some proviso attached to the MACRAO agreement, but I have seen it deter a student who is comparing one or more options. The more complex the proviso, the more skeptical the student becomes.”*
- *“Provisos can then negatively influence the decision because they are perceived as **more classes**.”*
- *“Provisos make it more difficult to advise students. In a sense, it appears they are attempts to “get around” the spirit of the MACRAO agreement.”*

Comments & Perceptions, continued...

- *“Students sometimes think it is a magical exception. They want to be engineers, can’t do well in math and assume that if they complete the MACRAO requirement the whole basic set of requirements are taken care of. However, if a school is going to use MACRAO, then too many provisos just confuse matters.”*
- *“I think many students (and faculty) believe the MACRAO guarantees a lot that it doesn't so we try to educate the students about what it is and the limitations.”*

Comments & Perceptions, continued...

- *“It is unrealistic for the transfer student to assume that the MACRAO stamp or the associate’s degree will completely eliminate all transfer obstacles. Unfortunately, we community college counselors/advisors sometimes over-simplify the transfer process because a huge part of our role is to allay fears and make everything go as easily and smoothly as possible for our mostly first-generation students. And, sometimes the student hears only what he/she wants to hear, and assumes that the stamp and/or the degree stands for more than it does.”*

Comments & Perceptions, continued...

- *“Many students complete MACRAO, and then they choose a school with provisos. Often they have to take additional lower level general education at those transfer schools, at much higher prices. Therefore, they feel they wasted time and money taking classes they didn’t need. This generates ill will toward both the community college and the university. Often students see community colleges as incompetent and the universities as mercenaries trying to get more money out of them.”*
- *“Often, first-time college students do not know what they want to do or where they want to transfer. My first bit of advice is to begin taking MACRAO courses for the first 30 credits.”*

Agreement vs. Guides

- *“MACRAO is a great guide until they find their major.”*
- *“In my mind, clear detailed transfer guides are still the number one transfer tool.”*
- *“I don't concentrate too much on the provisos, particularly when I have a curriculum guide sheet.”*
- *“It is easy to advise students when transfer guides designate MACRAO and include provisos.”*

Summary

- For the most part, community college counselors try to do their very best when serving their students.
- Sometimes, while advising, counselors do not have time to pay attention to provisos, they encourage students to talk with counselors at transfer schools, and hope everything will work out for the student when he or she arrives at their chosen university. Regardless of advice given, the student has a responsibility to ask questions and make sure they are making the right choices.

Summary, continued...

- Basically, provisos to the MACRAO Transfer Agreement invoke conditions that tend to make the transfer process more confusing and prone to advising errors.
- Many provisos were put in place more than 30 years ago and the rationale for them may have been forgotten or are now obsolete.
- To the very least, each transfer school with proviso should enter into a discussion of why the proviso was set in place and whether there is a continued need for it to exist.

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2. Provisos Effect Advising

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