



**Committee on the Transferability of Core College Courses  
Final Recommendations & Implementation Update  
February 2016**

**Background**

In 2012 the Michigan Legislature included boilerplate language in the community college appropriations bill that focused on improving the transferability of core college courses by revising the current Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars & Admissions Officers (MACRAO) agreement. The language (see below) created a committee that included 5 community colleges representatives, five individuals from the public universities, and four legislators (two from each chamber). The legislation also required an interim report in March 2013 and a final report in September 2013.

To guide this work, the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) and the Michigan Association of State Universities (MASU – formerly Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan) identified individuals to develop recommendations to be vetted. Community college representatives (from Glen Oaks, Macomb, Mott, North Central, and Schoolcraft) met with their university counterparts (represented by Central Michigan, Eastern Michigan, Michigan State, Oakland, and Western Michigan University) to identify the critical issues and/or barriers and lay out a process for vetting recommendations for improving the transfer of core college courses. Individuals from the leadership of MACRAO also participated in these discussions. The new statewide transfer agreement established as a consequence of this committee became known as the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA).

**Guiding principles and recommendations for a revised “Michigan Transfer Agreement” (MTA)**

*Guiding Principles:*

- Make the agreement simple and easy to understand
- Keep the agreement student-focused
- Treat transfer students the same as native students at the receiving institution
- Acknowledge the distinction between the MTA and degree requirements
- Promote transparency among institutions to ensure accurate transfer information for students
- Require students to complete at least one credit-bearing course at the institution awarding the MTA

*Recommendations for the newly named Michigan Transfer Agreement:*

To fulfill the Michigan Transfer Agreement, students must successfully complete at least 30 credits, with at least a 2.0 in each course. These credits, which will be certified by a Michigan community college, should be met according to the following distributions (see the MTA Articulation Handbook for more details):

- 1 course in English Composition
- A second course in English Composition or 1 course in Communications
- 1 course in Mathematics from one of three pathways: College Algebra, Statistics or Quantitative Reasoning
- 2 courses in Social Sciences (from two disciplines)
- 2 courses in Humanities and Fine Arts (from two disciplines excluding studio and performance classes)
- 2 courses in Natural Sciences including one with laboratory experience (from two disciplines)

### **Rationale for these recommendations**

*Providing institutional flexibility and eliminating existing provisos* – There is consensus that receiving schools have too many provisos or exceptions with the current MACRAO agreement. By adding a mathematics course, an additional natural science course, and acknowledging that learning outcomes such as global awareness and diversity are embedded in existing courses these recommendations seek to eliminate the issues that led to the provisos in the existing agreement. The goal of this revised agreement is to establish requirements that would fulfill many of the general education requirements at Michigan public universities. Similar to the autonomy provided by the Higher Learning Commission, our accrediting body, the agreement does not attempt to dictate specific courses as this is the purview of individual colleges and universities—specifically the faculty.

*Recognizing multiple student paths* – The recommendations recognize that students enroll in higher education institutions with different education goals and needs. For example, students intending to pursue programs in the social sciences or liberal arts may not require more rigorous courses in mathematics. The recommendation of one mathematics course, while acknowledging the need for numeracy, is intended to avoid creating a barrier for students to satisfy the requirements of the transfer agreement.

*Treating the 30 credits in the agreement as a block* – The recommendations under this revised agreement treat the requirements as a block of core college courses as long as students earn at least a 2.0 in each course. For the block transfer to work seamlessly for students, it is incumbent for institutions to keep course equivalencies that satisfy the MTA up-to-date and readily available on college, university, and Michigan Transfer Network websites.

*The role of the 30 Credits of Core College Courses as part of a Student's Bachelor Degree Requirements* – In describing how the core college courses fit into a student's bachelor degree, one can envision that the 30 credits of core college courses will most likely fulfill all or the majority of the student's lower level general education requirements dependent on their major e.g., engineering vs. fine arts. If the course does not fit into the major requirements then that course and credits will be counted towards the student's overall degree requirements. At some institutions, students are required to also take upper level general education courses for their bachelor's degree. The relationship of core college courses to university general education and degree requirements needs to be clearly articulated through the implementation process and in communications with students about the MTA.

*Promoting credential attainment* – There was a discussion among the group about the need to promote credential attainment. The concept of a general education certificate may contribute to this goal, but the committee also acknowledged the more important aspect of improving the transfer between community colleges and universities is to help students move more quickly to bachelor's degrees.

### **MTA Initial Implementation**

The above recommendations were shaped by considerable institutional input and feedback from colleges and university staff. The legislature required the submission of a final report to the legislature by September 1, 2013. The committee presented the final recommendations to the appropriate legislative committees by that date with the understanding that implementation of this new agreement was beyond the scope of the legislatively mandated group.

The charge of the Committee on the Transferability of Core College Courses was to develop the broad outlines of a new agreement (see the legislative language below) and the committee recommended that implementation of the MTA be led by MACRAO. The committee believed that institutions should commit to providing clear and readily available information regarding the process for satisfying the Michigan Transfer Agreement at their institutions. MACRAO formed an ad hoc committee that met from July 2013 through April 2014 to guide the implementation process.

*The MTA took effect for students who begin their studies in the fall 2014 semester.* Students who started prior to fall 2014 will be able to complete the existing MACRAO Agreement until the end of the summer 2019. Irrespective of time, if a student already has a "MACRAO Satisfied" endorsement previously placed on their transcript, it is expected that receiving institution will still honor it in the best interest of this individual. All two and four-year public institutions, as well as a significant number of private institutions, have agreed to participate in the new MTA.

To facilitate the adoption of the MTA, the MACRAO implementation committee developed a detailed "Michigan Transfer Agreement Articulation Handbook" that describes the details and best practices for implementation of the new agreement. This handbook along with other documents designed to aid the implementation process, such as Frequently Asked

Questions, have been created and posted at the follow link on the MACRAO website:

<http://www.macrao.org/Publications/MTA.asp>.

In addition, MACRAO developed a communication plan to inform students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders of the new agreement. The MACRAO implementation committee, working with all the appropriate constituents including institutional leadership and faculty also held several training and professional development sessions through the spring and summer of 2014 to help practitioners prepare for the launch of the MTA in the fall 2014 semester. Finally, as part of their role in facilitating the MTA moving forward, MACRAO will be responsible for a regular process for reviewing the Michigan Transfer Agreement for needed changes. The MACRAO College Articulation Committee will be the entity that ensures this happens.

As part of the committee recommendations submitted in September 2013, the group highlighted two broad issues that would require additional dialogue between and among institutions as the MTA is implemented. Below is an update on these issues:

1. *Residency requirements and issues of student swirl* – As noted previously, the committee acknowledged the increasing prevalence of student swirl between and among two- and four-year institutions. As such, there was significant discussion about the appropriate residency requirement for an institution to award a “stamp” under the new transfer agreement. While the committee recognizes the appropriate need for institutions to have a process for students to establish a transcript at their institution, the committee recommends that this new agreement be distinct from associate degree residency requirements and that no residency requirement be required for the Michigan Transfer Agreement beyond students completing at least one credit-bearing course at the institution awarding the MTA.

It is important to note that given other significant discussions on related issues such as changes to accreditation “assumed practices” and reverse transfer agreements, MCCA will work in conjunction with MACRAO to facilitate a conversation with the Michigan community colleges about these issues with an eye toward more consistency on residency requirements across community colleges. These conversations are ongoing. This past summer the Higher Learning Commission, which is the regional accreditor for all Michigan postsecondary institutions, revised their expectations about residency requirements. This change has created an opportunity to explore this issue across the state. It is important to note that while this is a critical issue, the dialogue about residency requirements is not central to the implementation of the MTA and should not hold up that process.

2. *Clarifying the MTA mathematics requirement* – The legislative committee acknowledged that the new mathematics requirement might present a potential barrier for some students to progress and complete an associate’s or a bachelor’s degree credential depending on their programmatic path. While the initial MTA recommendations articulated that a course needed to be taken from one of three math pathways—College Algebra, Statistics, and Quantitative Reasoning—they also indicated the need to further clarify the MTA Math requirement. To move this process forward and refine the original recommendations for the MTA math requirement, a taskforce was formed in fall 2013 to prepare a practical description and expectations for courses in each pathway. This group included math faculty from public community colleges and universities as well as an individual from an independent college. These individuals were selected in partnership between the leadership of MichMATYC, the Michigan Section of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), as well as MCCA, PCSUM and the Michigan Independent Colleges & Universities (MICU). The charge of this group was to articulate the levels and types of competencies that will need to be included in each math pathway at sufficient rigor to allow the corresponding courses to transfer. These detailed descriptions have now been finalized and can be found in the MTA Articulation Handbook.

### **2016 MTA Implementation Update**

MACRAO’s implementation committee concluded its work in April 2014. The Association then took steps to create another ad hoc committee (MTA 2.0 Ad Hoc Committee) to monitor the implementation and address any questions or concerns that arose during this transitory period. The committee began its work by reviewing web sites and publications for each of the MTA participating public institutions to ensure that their implementation was in compliance with the agreement. Overall, the committee was pleased by the progress made during the first year of the MTA’s implementation. Specific issues were communicated with campuses in the MTA Implementation Update (see Appendix A) distributed widely among the membership of MACRAO, MASU, and MCCA in Fall 2015.

A number of outstanding issues not addressed in the initial MTA eventually surfaced, which the committee then reviewed as part of its work. Examples of such issues included swirling, prior learning assessment credit, military credits, out of state credits, dual enrolled credits, and the necessity of having a permanent MTA oversight body. Below is an update on these issues:

1. Swirling (*under discussion*) – There is compelling evidence that proves a large number of students are starting at one institution and transferring to at least one or more institutions in their higher education career. The committee is currently discussing best practices to facilitate transferability of these disparate credits.
2. Prior Learning Assessments (*under discussion*) – An increasing number of students come to higher education having successfully completed International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework, or have taken Advanced Placement (AP), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), and/or DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) assessments. The committee is currently discussing how prior learning assessments may fit into the MTA.
3. Military Credits (*under discussion*) –The committee is currently reviewing how military training experiences as demonstrated on a Joint Services Transcript may fit into the MTA.
4. Out of State Credits (*resolved*) – The committee agreed that applicable out of state credits coming from regionally accredited institutions is expected to be applied towards the MTA.
5. Dual Enrolled Credits (*resolved*) – The committee agreed that applicable dual enrolled college credits coming from regionally accredited institutions is expected to be applied towards the MTA.
6. Permanent MTA Oversight Body (*under discussion*) – The committee is currently discussing the need for a permanent oversight body who will monitor the MTA on a regular basis, ensure the agreement is amended as necessary, and take action against participating institutions who violate the agreement.

It is the intent of the committee to conclude its work by May 2016. MACRAO will communicate with all MTA participating institutions of applicable changes to the agreement as a result of the issues currently being discussed.

#### **Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Act Language for the Committee on the Transferability of Core College Courses (Sec. 210a)**

(1) A committee shall be created to develop a process to improve the transferability of core college courses between community colleges and public universities on a statewide basis. Building off of the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers agreement and existing articulation agreements in place between individual institutions, the committee shall work to develop equivalency standards of core college courses and identify equivalent courses offered by the institutions.

(2) The committee shall be composed of the following:

- Five representatives from community colleges selected by MCCA
- Five representatives from public universities selected by PCSUM
- One member of the House of Representatives selected by the Speaker of the House.
- One member of the House of Representatives selected by the Minority Leader of the House.
- One member of the Senate selected by the Senate Majority Leader.
- One member of the Senate selected by the Senate Minority Leader.

(3) The committee shall submit interim project status reports to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Community Colleges and Higher Education, the Senate and House Fiscal Agencies, and the State Budget director by March 1, 2013 and September 1, 2013.

#### **Committee on the Transferability of Core College Courses (2012-2013)**

*Community college representatives:*

Amy Fugate - Vice President, Academic Affairs, Mott Community College

Ana Gaillat - Dean of Teaching and Learning, Glen Oaks Community College

Laurie Kattuah-Snyder - Associate Dean of Advising and Partnerships, Schoolcraft College

Donna Petras - Dean, University Relations, Macomb Community College

Paula Welmers - Counselor - Student Services, North Central Michigan College

University representatives:

Pat Cygnar - Director of Community Relations, Eastern Michigan University  
David Johnson - Manager, Undergraduate Degree Programs, Central Michigan University  
Steve Shablin - Registrar, Oakland University  
Linda Stanford - Associate Provost for Academic Services, Michigan State University  
Christopher Tremblay - Associate Provost for Enrollment Management, Western Michigan University

Legislative members:

State Senator Glenn Anderson  
State Senator Darwin Booher  
State Representative Kevin Cotter  
State Representative Pam Faris

Other participants:

Mike Hansen, Michigan Community College Association  
Chris Baldwin, Michigan Community College Association  
Erin Schor, Michigan Community College Association  
Jenny Schanker, Michigan Community College Association  
Mike Boulus, Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan  
Patty Farrell-Cole, Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan  
Karen Hutslar - Registrar, Central Michigan University & MACRAO representative  
John Meldrum - Asst. Dean/Registrar, Sacred Heart Major Seminary & MACRAO representative

**MACRAO MTA Ad Hoc Implementation Committee (2013-2014)**

Chair: Carrie Jeffers - Director/Registrar, Enrollment Services, Macomb Community College & MACRAO President  
Co-Chair: John Meldrum - Asst. Dean/Registrar, Sacred Heart Major Seminary & MACRAO President-elect  
Chris Baldwin - Executive Director, Michigan Center for Student Success, Michigan Community College Assn  
Lee Cruppenink - Assistant Director of Admissions, University of Michigan - Flint  
Amy Fugate - Vice President, Academic Affairs, Mott Community College  
Patty Farrell-Cole - Director, University Outreach & Policy Research, Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan  
Karen Hutslar - Registrar, Central Michigan University  
Diane Patrick - Associate Dean of Student Affairs/Registrar, Grand Rapids Community College  
Carol Taberski - Registrar, Northwestern Michigan College  
Tricia Westergaard - Senior Associate Registrar, Oakland University

**MACRAO MTA 2.0 Ad Hoc Committee (2015-Present)**

Chair: John Meldrum - Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Oakland University & MACRAO Immediate Past President  
Co-Chair: Libby Bonnell - Assistant Director of Admissions, Grand Valley State University & MACRAO President  
Amy Fugate - Vice President, Academic Affairs, Mott Community College  
Katie Giardello - Director of Veteran and Transfer Initiatives, Michigan Center for Student Success, MCCA  
Daniel Hurley - CEO, Michigan Association of State Universities (MASU)  
David Johnson - Manager, Undergraduate Degree Programs, Central Michigan University & MACRAO College Articulation Committee Co-Chair  
Laurie Kattuah-Snyder - Associate Dean of Advising & Partnerships, Schoolcraft College  
Stephen Linden - Registrar, Oakland Community College  
Rhonda Longworth - Associate Provost, Eastern Michigan University  
Christopher Marx - Director of Transfer Articulation, Davenport University & MACRAO College Articulation Committee Chair  
Bob Murphy - Director of University Relations & Policy, Michigan Association of State Universities (MASU)  
Erica Orians - Executive Director, Michigan Center for Student Success, MCCA  
Kim Rotundo - Registrar, Northern Michigan University  
DeeDee Stakely - Transfer Services Center Director, Ferris State University & MACRAO Legislative Issues Committee Chair