Negotiating Articulation Agreements with Universities

Dr. Linda S. Bowman Vice President, Colorado Community College System President Emeritus, Community College of Aurora Fulbright Senior Specialist

In the United States, articulation is a responsibility of each state, not of the federal government, and indeed, many states have no strong policies. Therefore, the experiences of the states vary, with some quite progressive but others having lagged in their ability to define and ensure clear pathways for students.

U.S. community colleges are a product of the 1960s, when broadening access to higher education became a policy objective, though some two-year or junior colleges were founded in the early twentieth century. Termed "democracy's colleges," community colleges were developed with a complex mission:

- to provide transfer to the four-year colleges and universities (Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, General Education core);
- to offer certificates and degrees (Associate of Applied Science) designed to qualify students to go directly into the workplace;
- to offer remedial education designed to prepare students for college-level work in areas in which they are deficient;
- to provide learning designed for acquiring workplace skills, sometimes onsite:
- and community learning in areas of interest for community members.

Community colleges were designed as open access institutions, with few entrance requirements beyond the demonstrated ability to benefit from the instruction. They have provided a second, or third, or fourth chance to students who, for whatever reason, cannot or do not wish to enter four-year higher education or were not able to enter or complete higher education in the past. Some specific programs have requirements for admission, but as a rule, the institutions are open to all above a certain age (usually 16 or 17).

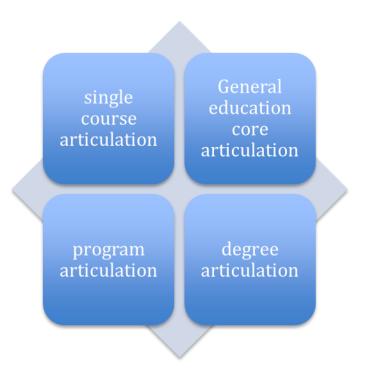
Throughout the subsequent decades, the explosive growth of the community colleges has validated the need for these institutions. U.S. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama have looked to community colleges as an important key to U.S. economic prosperity. However, after five decades, many challenges remain. While there are private two-year colleges, the publicly funded colleges generally bear the responsibility for educating their communities. Even as demand for services has grown, public funding has declined. Many colleges are facing severe budget limitations, as governing bodies and state policy-makers are reluctant to raise tuition costs commensurate with the decline in state funding. Further, articulation of credits and degrees remains a challenge in many states. Students may

have to navigate a complex system of articulation, sometimes arriving at the university only to find that some credits do not transfer or transfer only as electives, therefore delaying their graduation. The issue of student progress to the degree is also a challenge for community colleges. Some students attend with the intention of taking only a class or two. Most students attend part-time, therefore lengthening the time needed to complete a certificate or degree and lessening the odds of their graduating. Research has demonstrated that the longer it takes students to complete, the less likely they are to do so.

Further, the more complex and confusing the pathway to transfer, the greater the chance that students will not fulfill their intentions. However, the public and policy-makers are increasingly calling for degree or certificate completion as a measure of community college effectiveness. In the future, it will no longer be sufficient for colleges to provide access; students must successfully complete programs of study.

The process of articulation is difficult in that there are many types of articulation and many steps to its achievement.

Articulation by content:



Articulation by organization:



Given this complexity, institutional faculty and staff have difficulty navigating the system, and students and families have little chance of success unless concise agreements are created and clearly articulated.

At the end of this paper is a chart, created by Dr. Geri Anderson, Provost of the Colorado Community College System, which depicts the status of state articulation agreements. The chart was created as background for efforts in Colorado to improve the transfer of credit and articulation of degrees from the two- to four-year sector, as well as potentially for the four- to four-year sector students.

California in the 1960s and 1970s was the exemplar among states of strong articulation. In California, at that time, community colleges were essentially tuition-free and offered the logical start for the majority of students entering higher education. However, other states have since passed California in achieving widespread articulation and in some cases, complete transfer of the Associate degree.

Some states provide for transfer of individual, pre-determined courses. Others define a "core" of General Education courses that transfer as a "package" to the universities. Still others have achieved transfer of the entire two-year degree, as prescribed.

Models for examination include:

- Arizona, which has a statewide articulation and transfer system;
- Florida, where state law requires that Associate of Arts degree graduates from a state-approved community college be admitted as a junior (third year status) to any state university that can accommodate those students;
- Illinois, where all two- and four-year public colleges and universities are required to participate in some form of articulation;
- and Washington state, where the Associate of Arts degree transfers to all public and most private four-year institutions.

The process of improving articulation in Colorado has been one of fits and starts. In 2001, the State Legislature enacted the "Student Bill of Rights," (Colorado Revised Statutes 23-1-125), which included:

- the "right to know which courses are transferable among the state public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education"
- that "upon completion of core general education courses, regardless of the delivery method...those courses satisfy the core course requirements of all Colorado public institutions of higher education"
- the "right to know if courses from one or more public higher education institutions satisfy the students' degree requirement."

The Colorado Department of Higher Education, which coordinates public and private higher education across the state, established the "core" transfer project, which provided for the guaranteed transfer of a package of core courses, 33-34 credits, which has to be accepted into the public four-year colleges and universities. Later, the gtPathways (gt stands for Guaranteed Transfer) system was developed. More than 1,000 courses have been designated as transferrable by a council of representatives from the 25 public colleges and universities in the State. The guarantee is for the transfer of up to 31 credits that were "previously and successfully (C- or better) completed gtPathways coursework" (http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/Transfers/Students/html).

In addition, many colleges and universities, public and private, have established their own articulation agreements for degrees or for coursework. While many of them are cited on the highered.colorado.gov website, others must be discovered through investigation of individual college websites. These are referred to as Institutional Transfer Guides.

Further, the general Associate of Arts and Associate of Science are guaranteed transferrable. The complication arises when the courses, though transferred in, do not count toward the major, thus requiring a student to take additional coursework at the four-year school.

A significant breakthrough occurred in 2010, when the Colorado State Legislature (called the General Assembly) passed a bill that required the negotiation of statewide degree transfer agreements, beginning in 2010, with four agreements to be in place by July 2012 and at least 14 in place by July 2016. In concert, the Legislature also passed Senate Bill 10-088, which enabled community colleges to offer degrees with "academic designation," essentially designating a "major" course of study, in addition to the previously approved general Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. These designated degrees are designed for transfer to state four-year colleges and universities. Students are then guaranteed admission if they have fulfilled the requirements of an existing statewide agreement (Colorado Revised Statutes 23-60-211). Students must determine what major they will be entering and carefully take the degree requirements that will seamlessly transfer into that major.

Work continues on these degrees for transfer, even ahead of the schedule mandated by the State Legislature. The list of the completed agreements, nine of them in 2011, is also available at:

http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/Transfers/Students/html.

All in all, transfer is generally a complicated process for students to navigate. To truly achieve greater access to higher education, government, higher education, business, and the public must unite around guiding principles and the goal of access to higher education as a social and economic driver.

In negotiating articulation agreements, a number of key elements can facilitate articulation success:

- Clearly established course requirements: a common course numbering system among the two-year sector, with content equivalency and quality assurance built into the system
- Alignment of core General Education requirements: if not across all programs, then by program across the institutions and the sectors
- Recognition by the public that transfer is critical: public information campaign regarding the mission of the sub-degree sector
- Support from policy-makers: incentives for collaboration and disincentives for lack of collaboration
- Dialogue among institutions and between sectors: with a purpose to extend access by facilitating transfer
- Commitment by coordinating bodies: willingness to ensure that transfer agreements, once created, are upheld
- Clearly outlined guides for students: without which transfer is unlikely to occur

Finally, negotiation, as in all venues, is a matter of developing relationships, trust, openness, and collaboration. Two-year and four-year faculty must come together to find common philosophical ground and standards. The development of these relationships must occur before the fact; once negotiations begin, it is too late.

The following chart was created by dr. Geri anderson, provost, colorado community college system, in 2009. It describes in brief the policies of the 50 states on articulation.

SUMMARY OF STATE ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Stat	Statewide Policy	MOU's/	Incentives/Rewards for	Articulation Guide	Com Core	CCNS
e	(Legislation)	Agreements	Students			
AL	All applicable credits transferred from a two-year institution to a four-year institution shall fulfill degree requirements at the four-year institution as if they were earned at the four-year institution.		Yes. Transfer guide guarantees credit for courses as outlined in the guide. Up to half of the total degree hours may be earned at a two-year college.	http://stars.troy.edu/	Y	N
AK	None	Cooperative agreements are in place for the transferability of core curriculum requirements within the state university system.	Once the student has completed 30 semester hours, the high school transcript and ACT/SAT scores are no longer required at universities.	http://www.alaska.edu/f uture/transfer- information/index.xml	N	Y
AZ	ARIZ. REV. STAT. § 15-1824: Community colleges and universities cooperate in operating a statewide articulation and transfer system, including the process for transfer of lower division general education	Yes	The Arizona General Education Curriculum provides that students who complete the lower block of courses with a 2.0 GPA or higher will be admitted to the state public 4-year institutions	http://www.aztransfer.com/	Yes; three forms of Arizona General Education Curriculum: Liberal Arts, Business,	N

	credits for approved majors to four-year Arizona public universities.		without additional stipulations.		Science; Common Course Matrix lists equivalent courses by major	
AR	Provides that the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board establish in consultation with the colleges and universities a minimum core of courses which shall apply toward the general education core curriculum requirements for baccalaureate degrees at state-supported institutions of higher education and which shall be fully transferable between state institutions.	N	None	Comparable/transferrabl e course equivalencies listed at http://acts.adhe.edu/abo utacts.aspx#Q3	Y	N
CA	The governing board of each public postsecondary education segment shall be accountable for the development and implementation of formal, systemwide articulation agreements and transfer agreement programs.	Agreements involve course and major requirements, not A.A. or A.S.	Yes. CAL EDUC. CODE § 66739.5(d) grants admissions priority for transfer students completing general education and lower division major requirements.	http://www.cpec.ca.gov/ OnLineData/TransferPath way.asp	Y	Y

	Each department, school and major in the University of California and California State University shall develop, in conjunction with community college faculty in appropriate and associated departments, disciplinespecific articulation agreements and transfer agreements for those majors that have lower-division prerequisites.					
CO	m c	T	N	N	77	N.T.
CT	The Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education has established a General Education transfer agreement across all public higher education institutions that stipulates that any student taking and passing courses chosen from a specified list of categories and institutional course lists will be guaranteed transfer of those courses and their application toward degree requirements.	Institution to institution; between University of Connecticut and in-state community colleges	None	None	Y	N
DE	None	None	No	Delaware Technical	N	N

				Community College offers program-to-program articulation agreements with public four-year institutions. Information available at http://www.dtcc.edu/connecteddegree/		
FL	The 2+2 articulation agreement states that associate in arts (A.A.) degree graduates of a state-approved Florida community college must be admitted as a junior to any state university as long as the university has space, money and the curriculum to meet the students' needs.	None	See Legislation	Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking System (FACTS) is available at www.facts.org	Yes. Title 48, Ch. 1007.25 directs the Florida Department of Education to create 36 hour transferable general ed core.	Y
GA	None	Students who complete the core curriculum at an institution in the University System of Georgia are guaranteed full credit in transfer at all public twoyear and four-year colleges and universities, if	Students who complete the core curriculum or areas of the core are guaranteed full transfer of credit.	Not available online	Y	N

		they do not change majors or programs of study.				
HI	None	Course by course, department to department, institution to institution; Specific 2-to-4 articulation agreement between University of Hawaii at Manoa and University of Hawaii Community Colleges (One system)	None	http://www.hawaii.edu/a dmissions/transfers.html	N	N
ID	None	Course by course, 100- and 200- level classes only.	None	Annually mailed to graduating seniors; Higher Education Mailing	Y	Y
IL	Associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions are equal partners in providing the first two years of baccalaureate degree programs in Illinois. While each institution is ultimately responsible for the quality of	Course by course, institution to institution. [There are 107 participating institutions: all 60 public (12 university	There are institutional programs providing aid specifically for transfer students. The Illinois Articulation Initiative General Education Core Curriculum, consisting of 37-41 semester credits,	http://www.iTransfer.org	Y	N

	the programs it provides, both associate and baccalaureate degreegranting institutions are expected to work together to ensure that their lowerdivision baccalaureate programs are comparable in scope, quality and intellectual rigor.	campuses and 48 community colleges) and 47 private institutions.]	transfers as a "package" to substitute for the receiving institution's general education requirements.			
IN	The task force shall identify certain occupations for secondary and postsecondary articulation curriculum agreements in cooperation with the Department of Workforce Development. Public state institutions shall jointly identify at least 30 semester credit hours of general education courses; credit earned shall be transferable among all state institutions.	Course by course, department by department, institution by institution	None	http://www.transferin.ne t/index.aspx	N	N
IA	None	Regent universities and community colleges have approximately	Under individual agreements		N	N

		200 agreements, including 2+2 programs.				
KS	The State Board of Regents shall adopt a policy requiring articulation agreements among area vocational schools, area vocational-technical schools, community colleges, technical colleges and state education institutions providing for the transferability of substantially equivalent courses of study and programs	An articulation agreement exists among community colleges and state universities. Additionally, individual institutions have agreements between themselves. These may be course by course, department to department, or any other agreement that the institutions wish to establish.	None		N	N
KY	Joint programming and articulation of vocational-technical education non-degree programs with associate degree programs shall be pursued between the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and other	None	"Block" transfer of credit instead of course-by-course transfer credit evaluations. Students completing A.A.S and A.A certified to meet all general education requirements for 4-year transfer.	http://www.cpe.state.ky.us/	N	N

	postsecondary institutions when feasible.					
LA	Power to provide for articulation: The Board of Regents shall cause the postsecondary management boards to adopt and implement, no later than the beginning of the fall term of 2000, in the institutions under their jurisdiction, common core courses that articulate from any institution of public higher education to any other such institution, taking into consideration the accreditation criteria of the institution receiving the credit.	None	None	A common course matrix available at http://www.laregentsarc hive.com/pdfs/Academic/Articulation%202010-2011/Master_Matrix_2010.pdf	Y	Y
ME	None	None	None		N	N
MD	The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) shall: (1) establish procedures for transfer of students between the public segments of postsecondary education; (2) recommend cooperative programs among segments of postsecondary education to	Individual institutional faculties evaluate individual courses and determine equivalents. These articulations are posted on a statewide electronic	The Maryland General Assembly passed legislation to support a scholarship program for transfer students	The Articulation System (ARTSYS) for Maryland Colleges and Universities is a searchable database for course equivalencies and recommended transfer programs. It is available at http://artweb.usmd.edu/	Y	N

	assure appropriate flexibility in the higher education system; and (3) in conjunction with the governing boards, establish standards for articulation agreements.	database maintained by the University System of Maryland Office of Articulation.		Transfer guide: http://www.mhec.state.m d.us/preparing/stuguide. asp		
MA	The state board and the board of regents shall encourage the coordination of programs between public secondary vocationaltechnical school districts and public institutions of higher education. Said boards shall establish policies and procedures for the standardization of articulation agreements between the aforementioned institutions and that said boards shall meet annually to review the implementation of such policies and procedures.	Negotia ted by individ ual schools	Yes. One-third off tuition in the first year, extended to second year if a 3.0 GPA is maintained. MassTransfer provides 2-to-4 year transfer with a 35 credit common core. However, transfer programs still negotiated by individual schools.	http://www.mass.edu/m asstransfer/Students/Abo utMassTransfer.asp	Y	N
MI	Demonstration of an established career preparation system resulting in industry-validated career ladders for graduates of the program, including, but not	Agreements made by individual institutions and through Michigan Association of Collegiate	None		N	N

	limited to, written articulation agreements with postsecondary institutions to allow pupils to receive advanced college placement and credit or federally registered apprenticeships, as applicable.	Registrars and Admissions Officers (MACRAO) Articulation Agreement				
MN	Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities must implement the Minnesota Transfer curriculum at all state college and universities.	40 hour Minnesota Transfer curriculum (MnTC) transferable to Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and participating private institutions.	None	http://www.mntransfer.org/	Y	N
MS	None	None	None		N	Y
МО	None	42 credit hour block transfer of general education credits between public institutions.	None		Y	N
MT	None	Montana University System has a transferable core credit system	None		Y	N

NE	The community colleges are encouraged to work in cooperation with the University of Nebraska and the state colleges for the articulation of general academic transfer programs of the six community college areas. The community college areas may provide general academic transfer programs at six campuses.	Twenty-seven public and private colleges and universities participate in the Nebraska Transfer Initiative, which, since 1995, has facilitated the transfer of a 34 hour block of common core courses for those students who have earned an A.A.	None	The Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education intermittently publishes an Inventory of Academic Programs that is articulated between institutions by those institutions.	Y (AA only)	N
NV	Completion of associate of arts, science, or business degree fulfills lower-division general education requirements; approved baccalaureate level courses at community college transferable at minimum as general elective credit.	The Board of Regents also requires 2+2 transfer agreements between 2- and 4- year institutions	guarantee of complete general education transfer with associate degree completion.	Board of Regents institutions must create a brochure and website that outlines transfer policies.	Y	Y
NH	Requires development of articulation agreements between community/technical colleges and the University System of New Hampshire	None	None	http://www.nhtransfer.org/	N	N

NJ	None	System policy requires transfer of general education requirement, but does not identify specific courses	None	http://www.njtransfer.org/	Y	N
NM	The Postsecondary Education Articulation Act. Statute and regulation guarantee the acceptance in transfer and application to degree requirements of the statewide "lower division common core.	Most transfer agreements are between a public community college and a specific degree program at a state university.	None	The —Common Lower Division General Education Core Matrix is distributed to registrars and admissions officers on campus.	N	N
NY	None	None	None		N	N
NC	The goal of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement is to "adopt a plan for the transfer of credits, and the implementation, by the State Board of Community Colleges, of a common course numbering system [and] shall develop a plan to provide students with information regarding the transfer of credits.	Agreement between University of North Carolina and North Carolina Community College System	Guarantee that entire blocks of credits will be acceptable toward a baccalaureate degree upon completion of the associate degree	http://www.ga.unc.edu/s tudent_info/caa/ and	Y (CC Only)	Y

ND	Transfer applicants who have completed 24 or more semester or 36 or more credit hours toward a degree program shall be admitted to the institution if they are in good standing at the previous institution and have earned at least a 2.0 GPA.	Seven state-to- state agreements detailing block transfer of general education credits.	Guaranteed acceptance of AA and AS degrees as fulfilling all lower division general education requirements	http://www.ndus.edu/up loads/resources/2298/sy stemwide-agreements.pdf	Y	Y
ОН	Ensure transfer —in the most efficient and effective manner; develop course equivalencies.	Guaranteed transfer of a specific module of general education courses.	Priority admission given to a transfer student with an A.A./A.S. degree with 60 semester or 90 quarter hours. Transfer Assurance Guides for 38 different majors.		Y	N
OK	It is the intent of the Legislature that credits earned by students in any institution of higher education within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education be fully accepted at any other institution of higher education within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education and that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education	Students who complete the prescribed lower-division requirements of a state system institution may transfer into a bachelor of arts or a bachelor of science degree program at any senior institution of the state system	Course Equivalency Project that provides matrices for disciplines and courses that transfer within those disciplines for confidence in transferable coursework. All general education requirements for the A.A. or A.S. degree will be accepted for baccalaureate programs	http://www.okhighered.org/	Y	N

	(OSRHE) assume leadership in working with institutional faculty and administrators to ensure that students move smoothly from one level of education to another. Objectives should include development of transfer policies and guides, degree sheets, course equivalencies and common courses.	and complete his or her program in sequential fashion				
OR	(1) It is the policy of this state to encourage cooperation between the Oregon University System and community colleges on issues affecting students who transfer between the two segments and (2) all unnecessary obstacles that restrict student transfer opportunities between the two segments shall be eliminated.	Individual basis	None		Y (CC ONLY)	N
PA	Requires a minimum of 30 credit hours transfer to 28 public institutions—14 community colleges and 14 state universities.	The State System of Higher Education has established an "Academic Passport" and Student Transfer	None	http://www.pacollegetra nsfer.com/	N	N

		Policy to facilitate transfer of community college students to the system's four-year institutions.				
RI	Sets the guidelines and procedures for transfer between the Community College of Rhode Island and public four-year institutions.	Course by course, institution to institution, program to program	Students with an A.A. or A.S. with a 2.4 GPA or better are guaranteed admission at University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College	http://www.ribghe.org/tr ansfer11rev.htm	N	N
SC	The policy details the course equivalencies and course block transfers in place. The policy covers public community colleges and universities, as well as half of the state's independent colleges.		The Statewide Agreement on Transfer and Articulation provides junior-year status for any two-year public degree recipient whose program contains one of five Transfer Blocks	http://www.sctrac.org/	Yes; common core by 5 transfer blocks/majo r designations	N
SD	Technical institutes governed by the Board of Education and accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and Universities governed by the Board of Regents and accredited by the North Central Association of	Course by course	Students cannot enter a Bachelor of Applied Technical Science degree program without completing an A.S. degree.		Y	Y

	Colleges and Secondary Schools shall have articulation agreements in place to transfer 64 credit hours in the General Studies Baccalaureate Degree program and up to 64 credit hours in compatible programs offered by the respective institutions under the control of the Board of Regents.				
TN	The Complete College Tennessee Act amends the code language to require a common, transferable sixty hour core for both the Tennessee Board of Regents and University of Tennessee systems.		Satisfactory completion of the common core will lead to transfer to baccalaureate admission.	Y	N
TX	If a student successfully completes the 42-hour core curriculum at an institution of higher education, that block of courses may be transferred to any other institution of higher education and must be substituted for the receiving institution's core curriculum.	All public institutions are statutorily mandated to have 42-48 semester hour, institutionally defined core curriculum	None	Y	Y

UT	The development and implementation of articulation agreements between high schools, applied technology centers, colleges and universities will allow colleges and universities to award credit based on proficiency levels obtained by students in high school and noncredit applied technology center programs.	ENG and BUS Only	None		N	Y
VT		Vermont state colleges have an internal transfer policy. The University of Vermont has several articulation agreements with the Community College of Vermont and Vermont Technical College.	None		Y (CC Only)	N
VA	In developing upper-level undergraduate educational programs, the boards shall consider articulation agreements and course	In addition to the State Policy on Transfer, which applies to public two- and four-	Students who complete the "Transfer Module" at two-year institutions are guaranteed that those credits will transfer as a	http://www.schev.edu/st udents/StatePolicyOnTra nsfer.pdf	N	N

	offerings at area community colleges to ensure the appropriate breadth and availability of coursework. The State Policy on Transfer requires that Virginia's public four-year colleges and universities accept as meeting their general education requirements the general education included in an A.A. or A.S. from one of the state's public two-year colleges, with some exceptions.	year institutions, many institutions have negotiated program-specific articulation agreements. Many of these are for either (1) programs that have very specific lower-level prerequisite classes or (2) programs at the community colleges that are not considered transfer oriented but from which a number of students actually do transfer.	block in partial or complete fulfillment of general education at a public four-year institution.		
WA	The board shall, in cooperation with the state institutions of higher education and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, establish and maintain a statewide transfer of credit policy and agreement. WASH.	A.A.: Yes A.S.: No Across all public institutions (most private institutions also participate).	Direct Transfer students (A.A./A.S.) are given top priority in the admissions process.	Y (CC Only)	Y (CC Only)

	The statewide transfer of credit policy and agreement shall be designed to facilitate the transfer of students and evaluation of transcripts to better serve persons seeking information about courses and programs, to aid in academic planning, and to improve the review and evaluation of academic programs in state institutions of higher education				
WV	Higher education policy commission established; development of public policy agenda. —It is the intent of the Legislature that the commission be responsible for development and articulation of the public policy agenda for higher education.	Under the terms of the agreement, a student may transfer up to 32 credit hours of undergraduate coursework in the areas of English composition, communications and literature, mathematics, natural science and social science as general studies credits.	None	N	N

WI		System coordinates transfer between University of Wisconsin institutions.		http://tis.uwsa.edu/index .html	Y (CC Only)	Y (CC Only)
WY	Facilitate cooperative arrangements among state education institutions in the sharing of facilities, personnel and technology or otherwise assist in articulation between the institutions.		The University of Wyoming provides several scholarship programs specifically for transfer students. Dual-admissions agreements and block transfer agreements between the university and Wyoming community colleges facilitate students' completion of the A.A./A.S. at a community college.	http://outreach.uwyo.edu /Wyocatalog/index_searc h.aspx	Y	Y