



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 719 Transfer Students – Courses Counting Toward Chosen Degree

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Unfavorable Report

Joann Boughman, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Jackson and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on House Bill 719. The bill requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to establish procedures and standards for transfer articulation agreements between the 2-year and 4-year public higher education institutions. With two-thirds of incoming students now coming to us with at least some community college coursework, the University System of Maryland (USM) actively supports the development and maintenance of articulation agreements and the maintenance of a platform that ensure the most effective and efficient transfer pathways possible. Because of the availability of these articulation pathways, the number of transfer students admitted to USM institutions continues to rise steadily –over the 5-year period from Fall 2014 to 2019 transfer enrollments have grown from 23,355 to 38,449.

However, we are concerned that House Bill 719, which requires that at least 60 credits earned at any community college transfer and automatically be applied to a degree at any public four-year university is; (a) not the best solution to set students up for success, (b) is duplicative in some ways of what we're already doing in a more streamlined fashion, and; (c) will require serious resources to implement in ways that do not support our existing articulation system.

Not the Right Solution to Address Student Success

Mandating that blocks of courses from two-year institutions transfer into a four-year degree program without careful articulation to ensure equivalencies of learning outcomes between the community college and four-year courses will not necessarily support student success. Not every course taken at a community college has equivalencies at four-year institutions. For example, some technical courses, although challenging and up to date, may not transfer into a pathway for an engineering or cybersecurity degree. Similarly, certain academic majors require specific versions of prerequisite math courses. In those cases, while a student may have taken a course at the community college that appears similar in title, the learning outcomes may not be fully aligned, so the student may not have the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be successful in the next course at the four-year institution. Academic advisors attempt to guide students so these unfortunate mistakes don't happen, but a student may change a major or simply not follow the advice provided by a counselor. Inter-institutional processes that evaluate equivalencies among courses and carefully map program articulations ensure transferability of courses *and* student success.

Duplicative of much of the USM ARTSYS is Already Doing

House Bill 719 requires MHEC to establish procedures for the transfer of students, recommend cooperative programs, and establish standards for articulation agreements, all of which are already in place in Maryland. Unlike other states where the state agency responsible for all segments of higher education manages articulation, the USM has managed Maryland's 24/7 statewide articulation system, ARTSYS, since 1988. With over 1 million hits from academic advisors, students, and parents exploring their transfer pathway options, ARTSYS is recognized as the sole public articulation system in Maryland. ARTSYS maintains information on over 850 transfer pathway programs and more than 10,000 transfer course evaluations among two- and four-year Maryland institutions. Students can inquire in advance of taking any course whether it will be accepted for credit at another Maryland institution. ARTSYS also provides information on "recommended transfer pathways" (RTPs), with details about which community college course plan will provide the most direct path through the two- and four-year programs.

Will require serious resources to implement.

House Bill 719 also requires four-year institutions to identify any community college course that does not transfer and compensate the student by offering a substitute courses at no cost. Requiring four-year institutions to compensate students for non-equivalent courses that do not transfer will be costly both in terms of tuition reimbursements as well as administrative costs to implement. Those resources may improve our methods for being *proactive* about developing/maintaining articulations and making those transfer pathways clearer to Maryland students. Additionally, we are looking for resources to fund upgrades to ARTSYS. When first developed more than 30 years ago, ARTSYS was state-of-the-art; however, USM has not had the resources to conduct a full upgrade since the late 1990s to keep up with the changing higher education landscape. Upgrades to the system would add functionality and provide an even more holistic view of postsecondary education options across Maryland.

Other concerns regarding the details of proposed bill language.

USM four-year undergraduate programs do not charge students on a course-by-course basis, unless they are taking only one course at a time. Students are charged tuition for a load of 12 or more credits in aggregate during a semester. So, if a student took 12 "new" credits as well as taking the course that did not transfer because not all outcomes were covered in the community college course, there would be no additional charge for that course.

For all of the reasons articulated above, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 719, but would be happy to discuss other ways to improve transfer for Maryland community college students into the USM's bachelor's degree programs.